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**Topic: "Children, Crime, and Corruption:
A Case Study of Jamaica's Adolescents"**

**Presenter: Diahann Gordon Harrison,
Children's Advocate of Jamaica**

Background

The nexus between crime and corruption have long existed and their intimate connection seems to know no end. Both have devastating impacts on development, economic growth as well as the potential for investment. Beyond this, crime and corruption carry with them a high social price; the withering away of public trust in public institutions, i.e., erosion of social capital, inequitable allocation of scarce resources as well as contempt for the rule of law are just a few examples of the negative effects of these two issues. Added to this are also monetary costs associated with the two, especially as it relates to doing business. In 2004 the World Bank Institute published a report which indicated that just over \$1 Trillion was paid out in relation to bribes from a global standpoint annually.

In particular, these two issues have been cited as continuous and pervasive problems in developing countries such as Jamaica. According to the 2014 Global Attitudes Survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre, a median of 83% of participants across the developing countries surveyed (134), indicated that “crime is a very big problem in their country”. While a corresponding 76% say the same of “corrupt political leaders”.¹

Looking closely at the Jamaican context, the 2014 Gleaner commissioned Bill Johnson Poll noted that of the 1,208 Jamaicans surveyed, the majority believed that 70% of elected officials were corrupt and 50% of government employees were also corrupt.”²

¹ Pew Research Centre. November 6, 2014. “Crime and Corruption top Problems in emerging and Developing Countries. Retrieved February 24, 2015, from: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/11/06/crime-and-corruption-top-problems-in-emerging-and-developing-countries/>

² The Gleaner. October 9, 2014. Highly corrupt. Average Jamaican believes majority of public officials are shady. Retrieved February 24, 2015, from: <http://www.jamaica-gleaner.mobi/gleaner/20141009/lead1.php>

Similarly in 2013, Transparency International in their survey of Jamaica for the Global Corruption Barometer indicated that 85% of Jamaicans at the time believed that political parties were affected by corruption. A similar sentiment was also expressed about the police, private entities and even the media. Again in their Corruption Perceptions Index for 2014, Transparency International ranked Jamaica as 85 out of 175 countries which was little change over the 2013 ranking of 83 out of 177 countries and similarly in 2012, Jamaica was ranked 83 out of 176 countries surveyed. The figures presented by TI are evidence that there is a serious problem in relation to corruption in the Jamaican public sector. While it must be borne in mind that other studies have called into question the methodology used by TI, nevertheless the fact that these figures have seen little change over the years is still troubling.

It is true that over time, in Jamaica, there has been an increase not only in numbers but in power and influence of organized crime associations assisted by the existence of corrupt relationships from both the public and private sectors. Indeed, corruption in Jamaica has become so endemic that serious crimes and their perpetrators have been able, in many instances, to go unpunished. More importantly however is how the issues of crime and corruption have not only impacted our children's welfare negatively, but have also influenced them in a negative way. Indeed, children have and continue to feature in an alarming manner as victims of crimes; however, it is often overlooked that the way in which children are being exposed to (and encouraged to) participate in these activities can also influence children to become future perpetrators, i.e. Children in Conflict with the Law (CCL).

According to the JCF Statistics and Information Management Unit (SIMU), there were approximately 479 offences in financial year 2012-2013 for which children featured as perpetrators. In fiscal year 2013-2014, this figure had risen to 565, with sexual intercourse with a minor, break-ins, rape, and aggravated assault being the most prevalent offences committed. Males between the ages of 15 to 17 years also featured most significantly as perpetrators of criminal offences across all the categories of crimes profiled. In addition, over the fiscal period 2013-2014 a total of 460 male children were also transferred from police custody to the Metcalfe Street Juvenile Remand Centre.

OFFENCE	AGE												Total
	12		13		14		15		16		17		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Murder	0	0	0	0	4	0	3	0	5	2	14	1	29
Shooting	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	7	0	22	0	36
Aggravated Assault	0	0	3	1	5	0	17	0	18	2	21	3	70
Rape	0	0	2	0	17	0	16	0	21	0	17	0	73
Sexual Intercourse/Under 16	0	0	4	1	14	0	31	0	41	0	64	0	155
Robbery	0	0	1	0	6	0	15	0	25	0	26	1	74
Break-in	1	0	6	0	12	1	12	0	24	1	40	2	99
Larceny	0	0	3	0	5	0	2	0	11	1	6	1	29
Total	1	0	19	2	63	1	103	0	152	6	210	8	565

Figure 1: Table indicating offences by age and gender committed by children.

Children in Conflict with the Law (CCL)

A particular cohort of male children who were deemed as being in conflict with the law was selected for participation in the study. The profile of these males as derived from the February 2011 published study done by the Office of the Children's Advocate, indicated that a child in conflict with the law is usually a poor reader, from a low socio-economic background, one who knows his father but lives primarily with his mother, he would have also missed much of school

due to a lack of adequate funds to supply him with bus fare and lunch money, he probably would have been frequently engaged in fights at school, he is likely to be related to an adult who has been in conflict with the law, he is likely to have been associated in some way with a gang, his community is one in which marijuana (ganja) is easily accessible, he is also likely to have been exposed to alcohol, he may have been impacted by the death of a close family member, and he would have seen and/or heard violence being perpetrated against individuals in the community (inclusive of violence by the gun).

Social Learning Theory

You may be asking what may be accounting for the rising numbers in children who feature as not only victims of crime, but also as perpetrators which is my focus here today. Yet, if we only think for a second, the answer should not be far from one's mind. In compiling this presentation, I recalled the adage which states that "children learn what they live and live what they learn". In fact, there is an entire school of thought devoted to this. It states that human behaviour is shaped through observational learning. In so observing persons who children learn from, they imitate what they see. While this is by no means the only explanation for the assimilation of negative behaviours displayed by children or for juvenile delinquency, I offer this theory as one justification.

Who is a Child; What is Corruption and the International Conventions

According to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” As stipulated in the local legislation which guides Jamaica, the Child Care and Protection Act (2004), the same follows, that a child is anyone below the age of 18.

Corruption, much like crime is also understood in very general terms to mean the misuse of power for private gain, or the misappropriation of funds for self-aggrandizement. The term is also typically associated with the actions of public officials and or members of the political directorate; however, corruption is very much a part of the private sector and other widely trusted institutions in society.

Corruption can also be taken to mean the misuse or abuse of entrusted power, whether political, economic, or any other variations of power for the purpose of acquiring personal benefits while infringing on the legal rights of another person or group.

To further contextualize the concept we can say that there exists public corruption and private corruption. Public corruption refers to the misuse of public office for private gain, wherein a government officer benefits at the expense of the citizens he/she is meant to serve. In addition to this, public corruption may also be seen in situations where established public systems are dysfunctional and citizens are forced to pay ‘bribes’ in order to receive public goods to which they are already duly entitled.

In Private Corruption, the converse situation is observed whereby corruption takes place between individuals in the private sector, yet the general nuances remain the same.

Corruption may also manifest itself in varying forms for example by way of nepotism, bribes, extortion, rent-seeking, embezzlement, fraud as well as through patron client relations, i.e., clientelism.

The Study

The study utilized a qualitative methodological approach, and employed the social exploratory research design. Data was collected by way of focus group sessions with children who had come into conflict with the law from the Rio Cobre Juvenile Correctional Facility as well as with the OCA's Children's Advisory Panel.

The children who participated were asked a total of 10 questions, and additional questions were asked where the need for probing arose. Focus group sessions took into consideration the highest level of ethical standards especially with regard to confidentiality and anonymity and only those children who volunteered were selected to participate. Before the session, participants were also briefed about the purpose of the study and all questions and/or concerns were addressed before commencement of the session.

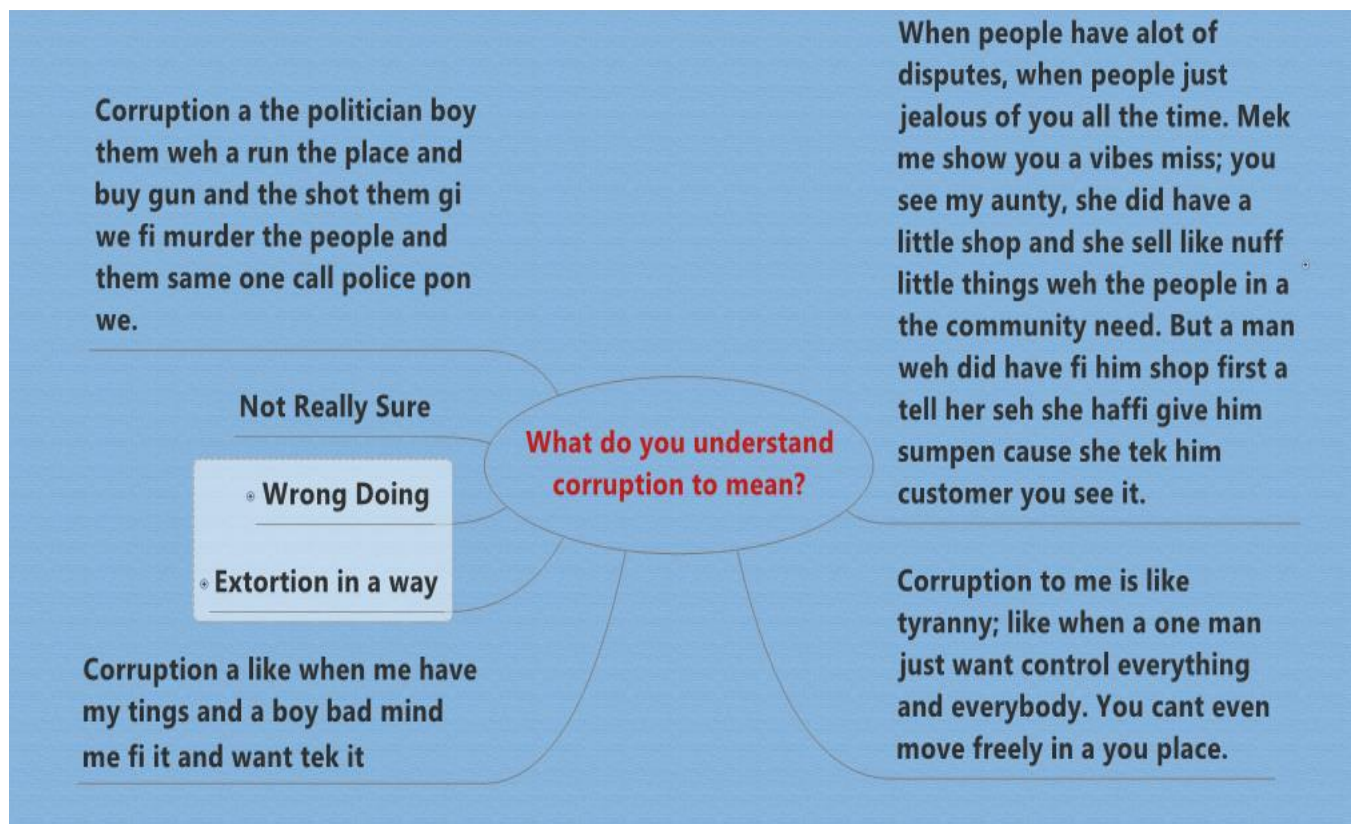
A purposive sampling strategy was employed as participants were selected based on predetermined eligibility criteria. A total of 3 focus group sessions were held, two at the Rio Cobre Juvenile Correctional Facility and one with the Children's Advisory Panel (each session had at least 8, but no more than 10 participants).

Information gathered was analysed using the constant comparative method for the development of major themes. For the purpose of the presentation however, very pointed responses were selected and presented 'verbatim'.

Findings:

The Findings are presented in the form of diagrams, based on the most pointed responses received by the child participants:

What do you understand Corruption to mean? (Rio Cobre)



What do you understand Corruption to mean? (OCA CP)

"You have some persons in higher positions who have authority who use their role and capacity to wield power over other people"

"Corruption is when one uses the power or authority that they have been given and use it to their advantage or the advantage of friends and family members usually illegally"

"Corruption is also like when teachers, if you don't go to their extra lessons there are things that they will not teach in regular class, like they only teach it in extra's. Like I even notice that children who go to the teacher's extra lesson get treated better than others of us who do not go. So you're basically forced to go to extra lessons, cause they also waste time in regular class"

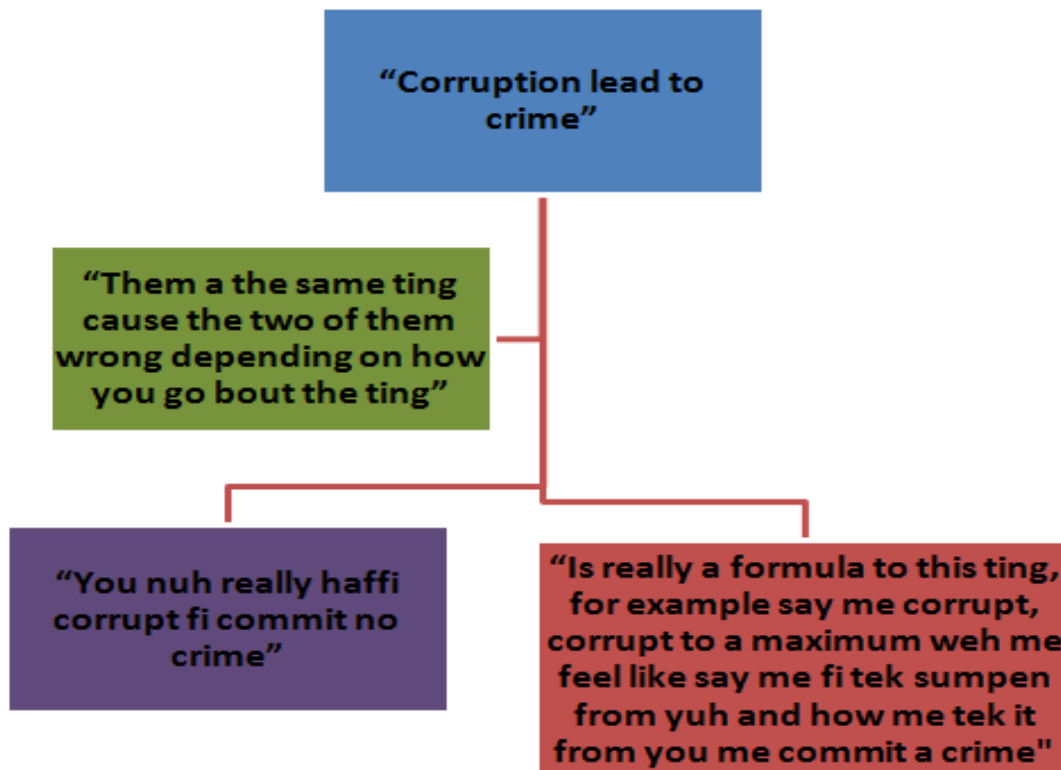
"Lying and back door deals"

"It's going against the set guidelines; anything that can be considered underhanded or going against the protocol which is supposed to be followed and you usually do this for your own benefit"

"Corruption is also a concept that can exist anywhere, even in the church"

"Corruption is like going against one's integrity, compromising your integrity to get some selfish desire or something that would not be right in law"

Is there a difference between Crime and Corruption? (Rio Cobre)



Is there a difference between Crime and Corruption? (OCA CP)

"Well really corruption is a form of crime"

"They are intertwined; they are basically one and the same"

"They are not the same, because someone that kills another person is not necessarily corrupt. It overlaps in a way though"

"Well you can say that corruption is a crime, but crimes are not necessarily corrupt"

Is Crime a Serious Problem in Jamaica? (Rio Cobre)



Is Crime a Serious Problem in Jamaica? (OCA CP)



Is Extortion an activity you would Consider Corrupt? (Rio Cobre)

"Extortion haffi gwan man, cause man haffi eat"

"It haffi happen fi a man survive"

"Chiny boy haffi pay cause them have it"

"Since people like the young generation cant get nuh wuk and dem ting deh, so how we a go survive"

"When we say extortion me nuh mean like say we come a yuh yaad and pop off pon you and say mek me get sumpen. Mek me tell you how we do it. In a my place we have a light system and some people can't manage fi pay public service light bill, so we have a ting that if you attach to our system every 2 week you would a pay we 1,500 and people find it easier fi do this and reasonable. So say every 2 week when we collect one 1500 bills, and say a 150 somebody live in a the community we would a mek sumpen, and like everybody weh woulda deh round we, we just share it back among we, so me wouldn't really say dat a corrupt a just a little hustling."

Is Extortion an activity you would Consider Corrupt? (OCA CP)

"The fear factor is what makes it extortion and what also makes it a crime. Because in order to get what you want from the person you depend on force and intimidation to take the person's belongings from them."

"Extortion is not just about soliciting money however, it also deals with soliciting anything from anyone without a valid reason or by force".

"Yes, because it is using brute force to gain somebody else's assets"

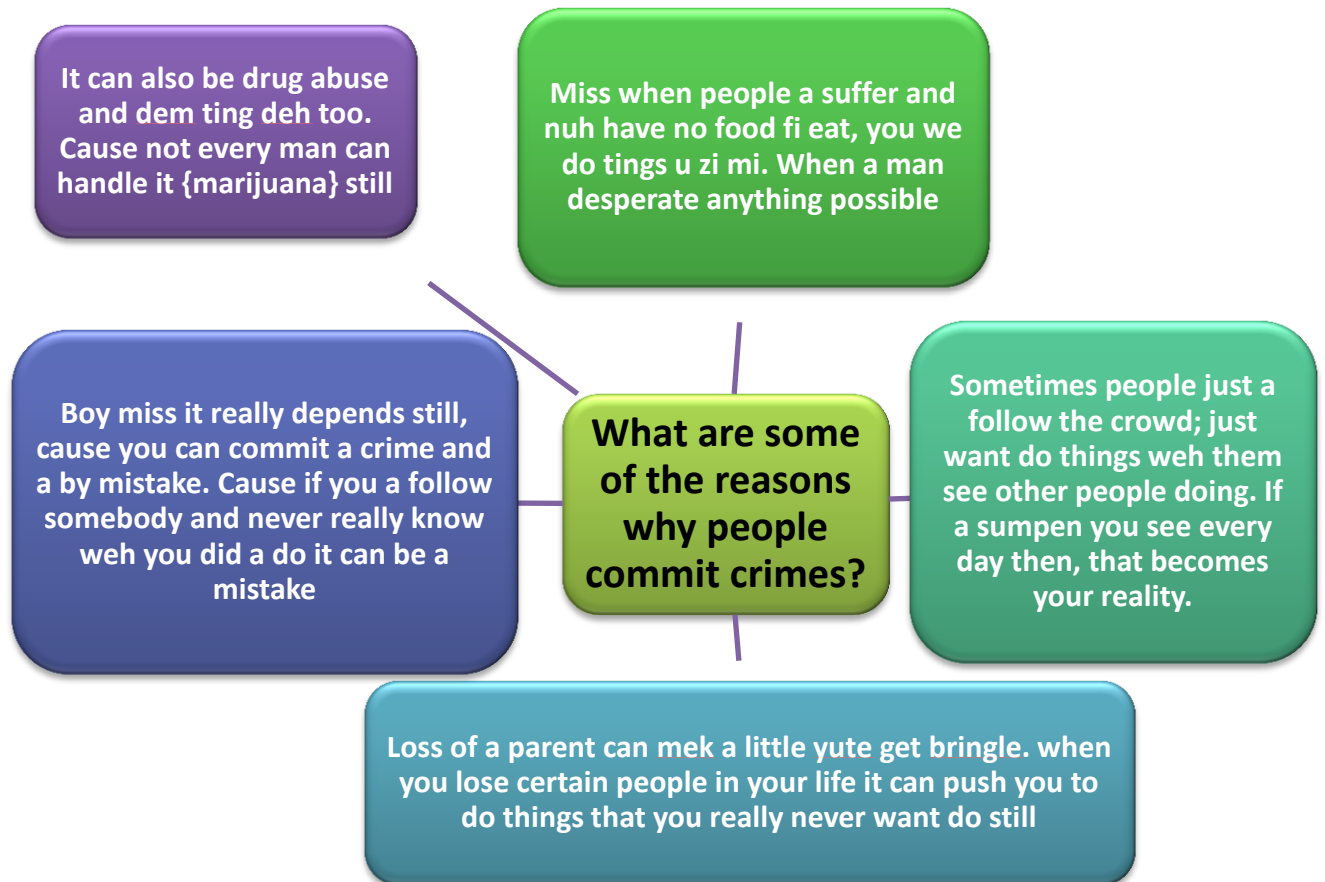
"I see you and I want something so I take it"

"It is corrupt because you are soliciting money from people through force or by illegal means"

"Yes it is and its very prominent in high school"

"Yes it is corrupt, because I see in my school where some children, like the first formers have to report to others and give them their lunch money"

What are some reasons you think motivate people to Commit Crimes? (Rio Cobre)



What are some reasons you think motivate people to Commit Crimes? (OCA CP)


Very narrow responses were derived from this group in relation to this question:

- Desperation
- The need to provide for one's family (survival)
- Greed

Describe your Community and Home Life (Rio Cobre)



Describe your Community and Home Life (OCA CP)

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- "Violent and distant; distant meaning we're not really connecting, maybe because of the different social classes which exist in the one little community. In my community every day I feel like I walking past strangers".
 - "My community is small and everybody knows everybody. So you may not necessarily talk to everybody as friends but we all know each other and everybody knows what's going on. That doesn't mean there aren't disagreements but nothing that would tear the community apart."
 - "I live on a hill and because we built the house, we don't have many close neighbours right now, the community is really still being developed, so we don't have close neighbours"
 - "My community however is an older community and there are many older people in the community, so you don't see many young people or children so it is usually very quiet unless someone is having a party. The houses are very close together and people are cordial, but not much interaction takes place between neighbours."
 - "I live in a so called ghetto community and there tends to be a lot of excitement. Music jumping every day, people play dominoes on the corner and football is played on the field. Police patrol a lot and ever so often there are gunshots, but it doesn't bother me; im used to it".
 - "In my community people tend to be very 'faas' and there is always a dance being held, boys are always on the corner smoking weed. But I don't talk to anyone really, I go to school and then I come straight inside and stay in my home."
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Conclusion

- The boys at Rio Cobre have indicated a clear disconnect in relation to the understandings of crime (to some extent) and corruption (very generally) as shaped by their lived realities, while the members of the OCA's Children's Advisory Panel seemed to have a better grasp of the concepts being researched.
- The comparison between the two groups has also shown that the way one is socialized and who is modelled during the process is critical to the way in which children perceive what is criminal and corrupt.
- Across the groups all the children viewed crime as a negative thing, yet the boys at Rio Cobre limited this to murder, while the OCA's Children's Advisory Panel was able to see and identify almost the entire gamut of criminal activity.
- In asking the children specifically about corruption (and zeroing in on extortion), it was observed that their views on the subject were very different. The boys at Rio Cobre viewed it as an appropriate means of survival while the OCA's Children's Advisory Panel members were able to identify it as not only an illegal activity but one which was also morally wrong.
- One's social and economic environment is critical to shaping one's behaviour. When coupled with improper social models, the likelihood that one can assimilate inappropriate behaviours is high.
- While some members of both focus groups shared similar community backgrounds and home life, (to an extent), the models who would have participated in the socializing of

the children were very different. This it is believed may have significantly accounted for deviant behaviour in one group and the converse in the other.