

BRITISH COUNCIL ACTIVITY IN JUSTICE AND SECURITY IN JAMAICA

In recent years, Jamaica has witnessed a dramatic increase in the levels of violent crime with widespread feelings of insecurity, powerlessness and the steady erosion of trust in democratic institutions being the inevitable consequences. At the same time, violent behaviour in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean has also become deeply entrenched in behavioural patterns within the household with worrying levels of domestic abuse and gender-based violence being the 'internal' dimension of something that is otherwise mostly perceived to be an 'external' scourge that happens only in the public domain. The seeming inability of law enforcement agencies across the region to stop and reverse the crime trend, apprehend perpetrators and protect citizens in their homes and work places has often led to populist political slogans, repressive measures and the proclamation of strong-armed tactics and 'no-nonsense' approaches that have remained questionable in both their ethical nature as well as their operational effectiveness.

In response to the abovementioned 'traditionalist' response to the crime situation and in an attempt to understand the crime phenomenon in the Caribbean primarily as a challenge to human development, many development practitioners, sociologists, criminologists and youth workers have begun to advocate the concept of Citizen Security as a framework for reform and as a context for social intervention. Citizen Security as a rights-based approach that seeks to create an environment in which every citizen can enjoy and exercise his/her fundamental rights and freedoms has also been embraced by major donor agencies, international development organisations as well as key lending institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the World Bank.

The British Council sees security and access to justice as crucial enablers of cultural relations. With our 80-year history in creating educational opportunities for young people around the world, with our track record of using the Arts for the benefit of social progress initiatives in partner countries and with our experience in facilitating participatory democratic processes as a pre-condition for cultural exchange we believe that our organisation has a contribution to make towards a more secure Caribbean environment.

The British Council offers to become a partner for Caribbean stakeholders in their quest to broaden access to education for the most disadvantaged groups and communities, to address the problem of social exclusion and inequality among young people and to bring about youth empowerment and the participation of youth in democratic processes.