

5. Jamaica: alienation and high drop-out rates

Concern for boys' underachievement is quite high in several Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean region. As gender parity indices have improved for girls in recent years, educators and policy makers have started to focus attention

Concern for boys' underachievement is quite high in several Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean region.

on the relative underperformance of boys compared to girls, particularly at the secondary level and in their progression to post-secondary and tertiary education. At the same time, Jamaica is facing one of the highest homicides rates in the world, with most of the killings committed by young men. To deal with the problem of youth violence, education systems both in Jamaica and the region have to redefine their role in moulding socially and emotionally well-adjusted young people who are equipped

with both a well-defined set of personal attributes and a predetermined range of aptitude and skills.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

A survey of basic enrolment data in Jamaica shows that over a 13-year period boys have stayed fractionally behind girls in terms of primary and secondary participation when looking at net enrolment ratios (NER). However, the differences at primary level are quite marginal. A look at Table 7, for example,

shows that primary NER for boys and girls went from level-pegging at 96 per cent in 1990/91 to a slight disparity of 94 per cent to 95 per cent respectively in 2002/2003, both registering a gender parity index (GPI) of an even 1.00.

TABLE 7: ENROLMENT RATIOS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION, JAMAICA

PRIMARY		1990/ 1991	1998/ 1999	2000/ 2001	2002/ 2003	REGIONAL AVERAGE 2002/2003
GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO (GER) (%)	MF	101	95	100	100	119
	M	102	96	100	100	121
	F	101	95	99	99	118
NET ENROLMENT RATIO (NER) (%)	MF	96	90	95	95	96
	M	96	90	95	94	97
	F	96	90	95	95	96

Notes: (a) Regional refers to the entire Caribbean

(b) Some data cover specific years or are an estimate. See the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) website for more information (www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/)

Source: UIS website, *Statistics in Brief, Education in Jamaica*.

In secondary education we see the beginnings of a slight disparity in NER, with boys falling three percentage points behind girls both in 1990/1991 and 2002/2003 (Table 8). The most recent GPI of 2002/2003 for secondary education stands at 1.04. Statistics from the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006* that show the percentage of repeaters in secondary general education, however, suggest a deeper problem, with boys more than twice as likely to repeat in 2002/2003 than girls (2.3 per cent for boys and 0.8 per cent for girls) (UNESCO, 2005).¹⁴

TABLE 8: ENROLMENT RATIOS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION, JAMAICA

SECONDARY		1990/ 1991	1998/ 1999	2000/ 2001	2002/ 2003	REGIONAL AVERAGE 2002/2003
GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO (GER) (%)	MF	65	84	83	84	88
	M	64	83	82	83	85
	F	67	85	85	85	91
NET ENROLMENT RATIO (NER) (%)	MF	64	79	74	75	66
	M	62	78	73	74	64
	F	65	80	76	77	68

Notes: (a) Regional refers to the entire Caribbean.

(b) Some data cover specific years or are an estimate. See the UIS website for more information.

Source: UIS website, *Statistics in Brief, Education in Jamaica*.

14 Statistical Annex, Table 8, p 339.

It is at the tertiary level, however, that the disparity becomes more apparent (Table 9). Female students have gone from being behind males in 1990/1991 to being more than twice as likely to enter college as their male counterparts in 2002/2003. Post-secondary non-tertiary education is also mainly female at 59 per cent of the total. What we see indicated here is an issue of either underperformance by boys when compared with their female counterparts that disallows them from accessing tertiary education, or a chosen path away from higher education.

TABLE 9: GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO (GER) IN TERTIARY EDUCATION, JAMAICA

TERTIARY		1990/ 1991	1998/ 1999	2000/ 2001	2002/ 2003	REGIONAL AVERAGE 2002/2003
GER (%)	MF	7	...	16	17	26
	M	8	...	11	10	24
	F	6	...	22	25	28

Notes: (a) Regional refers to the entire Caribbean.

(b) Some data cover specific years or are an estimate. See the UIS website for more information.

Source: UIS website, *Statistics in Brief, Education in Jamaica*.

A closer look is therefore needed at the details of boys' performance in formal education in order to understand the scope of their fall behind girls at the later secondary levels and the subsequent lower numbers that transition to both non-tertiary and tertiary education. For example, the Youth Literacy Rate for 2000-2004 (ages 15-24) showed a GPI of 1.07.¹⁵ Statistics available from the Jamaican Ministry of Education on the performance of boys and girls in the June 2005 Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations offered by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) demonstrates more clearly where girls are outperforming boys in terms of subjects (Table 10).

The table outlines by gender the number of students who sat each subject, and reveals that more girls are entered for 29 of the 35 subjects listed, with the six exceptions all being technical/vocational courses (building tech – construction, building tech – woods, electrics and electronic tech, mechanical engineering tech, technical drawing and visual arts). Overall, only 48,992 boys sat the exams

15 Statistical Annex Table 12, UNESCO, 2006, p 387.

TABLE 10: PERFORMANCE OF JAMAICAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE CSEC AT GENERAL & TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY LEVELS BY SEX, 2005

SUBJECT	TOTAL	NO. MALE ENTRIES	NO. MALES GRADE 1-3	% MALES GR. 1-3	NO. FEMALE ENTRIES	NO. FEMALES GRADE 1-3	% FEMALES GR. 1-3
ARTS							
CARIBBEAN HISTORY	5,101	1,621	959	59.2	3,480	2,168	62.3
ENGLISH A	19,956	7,654	4,011	52.4	12,302	7,995	65.0
ENGLISH B	6,917	1,885	1,075	57.0	5,032	3,491	69.4
FRENCH	592	182	123	67.6	410	286	69.8
GEOGRAPHY	3,728	1,792	1,008	56.3	1,936	1,121	57.9
MUSIC	77	34	22	64.7	43	32	74.4
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	2,211	877	649	74.0	1,334	1,086	81.4
SOCIAL STUDIES	10,484	3,803	2,801	73.7	6,681	5,314	79.5
SPANISH	3,077	717	447	62.3	2,360	1,491	63.2
SCIENCES							
BIOLOGY	4,661	1,545	941	60.9	3,116	1,950	62.6
CHEMISTRY	3,597	1,436	722	50.3	2,161	1,142	52.8
INTEGRATED SCIENCE	4,914	1,853	1,314	70.9	3,061	2,226	72.7
MATHEMATICS	15,958	6,551	2,595	39.6	9,407	3,690	39.2
PHYSICS	3,071	1,640	906	55.2	1,431	918	64.2
TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL							
AGRI. SCIENCE (DOUBLE AWARD)	358	133	120	90.2	225	209	92.9
AGRI. SCIENCE (SINGLE AWARD) ANIMAL SCIENCE	676	263	188	71.5	413	313	75.8
AGRI. SCIENCE (SINGLE AWARD) CROPS & SOIL	946	376	255	67.8	570	348	61.1
BUILDING TECH: CONSTR.	462	418	331	79.2	44	35	79.5
BUILDING TECH: WOODS	818	786	221	28.1	32	6	18.8
CLOTHING & TEXTILES	1,115	65	47	72.3	1,050	863	82.2
ELEC. DOC. PREP. & MGMT.	814	158	127	80.4	656	599	91.3
ELECT. & ELECTRONIC TECH.	1,786	1,690	837	49.5	96	52	54.2
FOOD & NUTRITION	3,523	484	374	77.3	3,039	2,618	86.1
HOME ECONOMICS	2,837	292	246	84.2	2,545	2,266	89.0
HUMAN & SOCIAL BIOLOGY	2,627	737	231	31.3	1,890	605	32.0
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	6,545	2,530	1,772	70.0	4,015	2,744	68.3
MECH. ENG. TECH.	818	787	324	41.2	31	13	41.9
PHYS. ED. & SPORTS	44	22	19	86.4	22	19	86.4
TECHNICAL DRAWING	2,569	2,327	1,169	50.2	242	140	57.9
THEATRE ARTS	212	50	41	82.0	162	145	89.5
VISUAL ARTS	1,685	974	634	65.1	711	426	59.9
BUSINESS							
OFFICE PROCEDURES	3,715	973	824	84.7	2,742	2,341	85.4
PRINCIPLES OF ACCOUNTS	6,408	1,959	1,314	67.1	4,449	3,156	70.9
PRINCIPLES OF BUSINESS	7,366	2,296	1,774	77.3	5,070	3,737	73.7
TYPEWRITING	435	82	41	50.0	353	162	45.9

Source: Policy Analysis, Research and Statistics Unit, 2006.

compared to 81,111 girls. This alone is a strong indicator of high drop-out rates among boys and disparity in survival to the final stages of formal education.

A further analysis of the data reveals that not only are the absolute numbers of girls receiving Grades 1-3 in these subjects much higher overall than those of boys as a result of higher entries, but also the percentage of Grades 1-3 among those girls who sat the exam is consistently higher than boys in most subjects with the exception of mathematics and a few technical/ vocational subjects and business. Again with the exception of mathematics, girls outperform boys in all of the sciences (traditionally thought of as male topics) and even perform better in those subjects where significantly more boys entered the exam, such as technical drawing. It is, however, in the arts that girls clearly outperform boys in both the number of entries and the final results, and particularly in English. For example, in English A we see 12,302 female entries compared to 7,654 male entries, with 12.6 per cent more girls achieving a Grade 1-3 than boys. Cumulatively, this does not bode well for the numbers of boys leaving school with sufficient English literacy.

However, it is important to place these statistics within a broader context that shows certain complexities. For example, if we look at employment data in Jamaica, we see a distinct gender advantage in terms of male employment as opposed to female employment. The 2004 unemployment rate for males stood at 8.1 compared to females at 15.7, and in terms of active job seeking, only 4.5 per cent of males were looking for work as opposed to 8.4 per cent of females.¹⁶ Putting this data together with that showing boys underperforming in more subjects than girls and therefore less likely to transition to further/ higher education can lead to either of two interpretations: either (a) boys are being forced/ expected to enter into employment as a result of several possible reasons, such as their poorer performance in formal schooling and a variety of other social and economic factors; or (b) girls may have no option but to continue in education due to societal bias within the employment sector in favour of males. The reality is that either of these possibilities is detrimental to the overall developmental growth of males and females if the principles of gender equality are to be upheld, while society in the long run will inevitably suffer for it.

16 Statistical Institute of Jamaica, Jamaican Labour Force Statistics. Data available at: www.statinja.com/stats.html

SITUATIONAL CONTEXT

The stratified nature of the Jamaican educational structure explains to some extent the high drop-out rates occurring at senior secondary level. Secondary departments in All-Age, Primary and Junior High Schools, which account for nearly 16 per cent of secondary school enrolment, do not currently go beyond Grade 9 and thus do not offer upper secondary education. It is after this point that there is a quick fall in enrolment, partly due to this lack of upper secondary school facilities. This situation is particularly problematic for rural schools with small catchment populations, and for poorer students who find it difficult to bear the costs associated with continuing education in a school located far from home. However, it is not clear why this particular structural feature affects boys more negatively than girls.

The literature review in Chapter 2 documented perspectives that showed Jamaica as a society where male privilege is widespread. However, while this patriarchal advantage allowed boys to outperform girls in the past, it is now suggested that as girls' access to education is increased, the impact of a narrow and potentially redundant masculinity on boys is hampering their achievement within the educational system.

We have seen that one of the more serious problems is students' literacy and reading abilities. Poor reading abilities tend to be concentrated among boys. Because of their reading deficiency, they cannot learn the content of various subjects. This is a paradox of Jamaican education that standard statistics may not clearly reveal: high enrolment rates through to lower secondary, coupled with low learning that could be hampered by decreasing interest and participation. The literature suggests a selection of reasons behind this increasing lack of interest and participation on the part of boys. A popular perspective within the country is that of the 'spoiling' of young boys who are raised under the Jamaican notion of 'tie the heifer and loose the bull': i.e., that a girl should be regularly supervised and given tasks to do in the house, while a boy should be allowed to do as he pleases. Rooted within a concept of masculinity that is now working negatively against boys in terms of their academic performance, the outcomes of this socialisation could be manifesting themselves among some boys through alienation from the values of high academic achievement and the school system.

...it is now suggested that as girls' access to education is increased, the impact of a narrow and potentially redundant masculinity on boys is hampering their achievement within the educational system.

A study of male underachievement opens the door for an examination of the ways in which both boys and girls are prevented from achieving. Thus while males may be dominant within the wider society, they achieve less than girls within the schools, and choose less frequently than girls to continue their education. Schools can reflect the values of the wider society, and teachers are not immune to the norms and expectations that the society has for each sex. The practices of streaming and exclusion of some students from activities for arbitrary reasons are examples of school structures and/or teacher expectations that can lead to differences in participation and achievement. Therefore, while the statistics may show gender parity in primary school enrolment and transition and only a slight gender disparity at secondary level, there could be an attitudinal problem that starts quite early within the system but is more difficult to identify, as pointed out by Evans (1999) in her study on Jamaica:

...boys and girls enter Grade 1 in equal numbers and with roughly the same kinds of experiences and skills, though we know nothing about their attitudes to school work at this age. ...By the time they reached Grade 5 and 6, major distinctions were detectable in their attitude to and interest in work, the quality of work which they produced and in the academic performance.... In many of the schools, the streaming decisions made at the Grade 3 and 4 level influenced the students' CEE chances for the remainder of the primary years. By Grade 5 boys were over-represented in the low streams according to the reports of the teachers... [and] we conclude that the primary school contributes to this differential socialization.

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH ADOPTED BY SEVEN INNER-CITY SCHOOLS

Jamaican educators are now realising the need to adopt more holistic approaches. This report will now look at a project that has aimed to tackle these issues through experience sharing, teacher commitment and designing specific initiatives for each of the schools that adopted the project. The first part describes the methodology and programme development of the project, and the second highlights the response of a particular school to the innovations used.

The 'Change from Within' programme

'Change from Within' (CFW) is a programme of human resource development involving a partnership among schools, communities, organisations and the larger society. The project was initially instituted by a former Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies (UWI), the late Sir Philip Sherlock, who brought together four schools that, independently of one another, were trying various ways of dealing with essentially the same problems of increasing violence and anti-social behaviour among boys. CFW took the shape of an applied research project where Sir Philip led a team of UWI scholars to find ways of building the self-esteem of students, which in his opinion lay at the root of the problems. Sharing ideas, participating in workshops and networking among the teachers were the main activities encouraged at that time, during which the programme expanded from four to seven schools. The methodology developed on the basis of analysis of work being done in these schools by the UWI team helped in a later expansion to 32 schools. The project demonstrated how CFW could become a powerful liberating force, building self-esteem and pride in one's ancestry and in the African-Jamaican record of historic achievements.

The Circle of Friends

The designated 'engine' of the programme was the Circle of Friends, a leadership programme where school principals met together with a few support staff and a research team. The purpose was to tackle difficult issues around the education of boys and develop actions/ solutions. They shared experiences and ideas, planned strategies for action and learnt how to improve leadership skills. The eight meetings that were held were central to CFW's participatory methodology and facilitated effective feedback and communicative planning. The group's meetings allowed for the adjustments of strategies depending on how different schools identified their problems. This meant that changes could be made to procedures depending on the circumstances that existed. There was always a certain amount of openness and willingness to respond to feedback and the experiences of others.

These meetings helped the participants to draw on others' rich experiences and a large knowledge base generated by other research findings across different schools. CFW thus is all about self-help and capacity building. As members of the group met regularly, shared with each other and grappled with the challenges before them, they developed a close network. They grew as a committed and dedicated team that not only made comments and suggestions about what was happening

It was found that individual styles and differences were less important when there was 'representativeness', a problem-solving focus and a recognition of the importance of the principles of commitment, shared vision and openness to learning.

at the schools, but also provided emotional and psychological support to each other.

As group members were faced with the challenge of mobilising participants at a number of different levels, it became clear that effective leadership requires a set of important qualities. Some of these are shared vision, commitment, team approach, problem solving/ conflict reduction skills, openness to learning, and the ability to provide mutual support and help manage the distress and challenges of change. It was observed that within this group members had different styles, approaches, capabilities and skills. What was important, however, was the recognition that leadership was about dealing with a particular reality and building a process of adaptive change in relation to that reality.

Participants were also encouraged to recognise that for organisations to change in a serious way, the people in those organisations also had to change and must do so by recognising and responding to the adaptive challenges facing them. The Circle of Friends as a leadership collective represented various levels of progress and allowed these representatives to work together on problem solving, drawing together all of the available resources to ensure sustainable solutions. It was found that individual styles and differences were less important when there was 'representativeness', a problem-solving focus and a recognition of the importance of the principles of commitment, shared vision and openness to learning.

The CFW methodology

The methodology of the CFW programme operated at a number of different levels. First, a participatory action research strategy was adopted that involved the engagement of all the stakeholders: the community, the students, the teachers, the administration and the parents. The main activities included observation, documentation, discussion and analysis.

At another level, the methodology also adopted a number of strategies for promoting change and building cooperation within and between schools. These involved:

- i creating a general awareness of the process;
- ii building social skills;
- iii establishing positive interdependence; and
- iv encouraging supportiveness and building a good interpersonal environment.

Positive interactions were promoted to create a climate that built morale and self esteem and encouraged respect, trust and conflict reduction. The methodology also included the process of institution building, 'servicing the infrastructure' to encourage self help. Workshops, training sessions and meetings served not only to provide guidance and assistance, but also to encourage the participants to identify and own the problems and challenges within their respective schools, generate workable solutions, map plans for action and implement strategies.

The programme development involved articulating the significant activities planned within the different schools. These activities specifically related to the challenges the respective schools had identified. The following list from one school provides an indication:

- i parental support and involvement in school activities;
- ii engagement of the communities;
- iii use of self expression and the arts as a means for self improvement, communication and motivation;
- iv guidance and counselling programmes as a means for identifying and solving personal problems;
- v bad behaviour seen as a cry for help;
- vi curriculum rooted in the cultural identity needs of Jamaicans;
- vii sensitivity to the particular needs of male students;
- viii highly trained teaching staff who are committed to the change process;
- ix efficient and effective management techniques and practices/ ownership by the key stakeholders as a result of consultation and analysis of needs;
- x leadership prepared to take risks;
- xi recognising the need to develop emotional intelligence for children.

Through a series of school-based action research projects, two factors were identified that contributed to the alienation of boys: (a) the nature of boys' early socialisation by their parents, community and school; and (b) the 'drill to kill' teaching and learning methods that increasingly have marginalised boys and many girls from the schooling process. CFW identified four key challenges in the development of boys and young men in Jamaican society:

- 1 A lack of self esteem among young boys. Many children, because of their cultural and material environment, can develop a sense of worthlessness.
- 2 The growing problem of violence and the lack of discipline in schools and communities. This was highlighted by recent severe acts of violence

- within at least three secondary schools that were part of the project.
- 3 Gender performance in school. This involved the way in which masculine identities work within the current environment, often moving boys away from academic performance and towards other compensatory but more negative types of behaviour.
 - 4 The nature of the current socio-economic environment and the limited opportunities for jobs after students graduate. Alternative lifestyles – often outside of acceptable values and good citizenry – were therefore seen as more attractive.

The important lesson learnt at this point was that there was no one method for promoting CFW; rather, it was an evolving process that operated at different levels. Individual schools responded to local peculiarities in different ways and were able to promote CFW by pursuing their chosen objectives and working with different visions. A matrix of change was developed working on four levels – individual, school, parents/ home and wider community – that schools and policy makers could use as a school improvement tool to raise the achievement of boys. Schools' experiences revealed that 'active learning' and radical ways of engaging parents in the education of their children were producing positive outcomes.

Over the year 2001-2002, CFW identified a set of common principles that guided the activities in the seven schools involved in the project at that time. They were generated out of the challenges identified within the schools and the approaches utilised to dealing with these challenges. These principles constitute the methodology of the CFW:

- empowering school leaders: leaders, being different from managers, have a vision, are ready to take risks, are approachable and also capable of empowering others.
- working on the positives – good practice: identification of areas such as sports and performing arts where success brings kudos and following up with positive feedback and creating a culture of striving for better performance and success.
- a new pedagogy: immediate environment being used as a learning resource allowing for debates and collaborative learning.
- mentoring: taking the responsibility for overall development of students and not limiting it to learning of specific skills or building particular kinds

of knowledge.

- involvement of parents and the wider community: parents becoming part of the school community, involving themselves in decision-making, helping in co-curricular activities and even evincing concern over the welfare of the teachers.
- involvement of students: consultation and communication with students, allowing them to be represented in decision-making through democratic channels based on well-defined norms.
- circle of support: developing a culture of sharing without fear or being judgemental, and learning from each other.

Blue Mountain High School¹⁷

Blue Mountain High School had been one of Jamaica's prestigious schools and in the past had educated the country's elite. However, that image had changed as the school started taking children from poorer backgrounds and faced problems of violence, gang-culture, drug addiction and underperformance. As part of the CFW project, the principal introduced certain interventions that focused on changing the basic quests of boys in conforming to the stereotypical gender identity and helping them develop a worldview that would go beyond themselves. The case study of the school is based on discussions with the principal, teachers, the guidance counsellor, parents and students as well as on participation in a number of school activities. Two such programmes were a series of workshops on parenting skills and a CFW residential summer camp.

Problems and challenges

The school was confronted by some of the common problems experienced by a number of inner-city schools in Jamaica. These included inter-school rivalry and conflict, student indiscipline and insecurity stemming from poor family relations, low level of teacher motivation and commitment, non-facilitative internal structures and procedures, 'cliquism' among teachers and lack of effective staff development programmes. The principal stated that when he first took up the position, he made a list of the problems and challenges facing the school as he saw it. He adopted a formal yet decentralised approach to leadership and designed an evaluation system for assessing success in changing the school.

17. The name of school has been changed to protect the identity of the school, teachers and students.

Increasing incidents of violence carried out by students of the school within and outside its premises were a major concern. An emergency response team, comprised of teachers and community representatives, was formed to deal directly with this problem and covered violence both on the streets and on the school compound. Also, a ban was instituted on cellular phone use, weapons and any instrument that could be used to inflict injury. The school rule was very clear and stringent in relation to weapons violations. The use of metal detectors was introduced in an attempt to eradicate weapon use at the school.

Identifying and tracking down gangs was not easy, and boys were included in the gangs from an early age. Teachers used the occasions of fights, inter-school altercations and stabbing injuries to identify the students and trace others. A First Grade teacher reported that she had identified at least two students in her class who sometimes did not come to lessons but hid in the bushes behind the school to smoke with older boys of a particular gang.

According to the principal, the strict measures against violence coupled with other measures have helped the school to almost completely eradicate gangs. Feedback from other sources suggests that the problem has not been wiped out altogether, but it has definitely been reduced.

The effective use of counselling services

The school introduced guidance counselling services and used them successfully to help students deal with various kinds of emotional problems. For instance, a boy faced extreme anger from his mother for bad performance and was humiliated by her in front of his teacher and peers. It was a volatile situation where he could have reacted violently, making the situation worse. The principal, teacher and counsellor together worked on restoring his confidence, and subsequent counselling sessions helped him to deal with the situation well. Counselling also greatly helped students after two separate accidents in which several students attending the school died. Many students, especially those who had lost their friends, were miserable and counselling helped them overcome their grief.

The shock of these deaths was also used to pull students away from violence and express themselves through various other means. The boys were encouraged to show their emotions, cry and not feel that seeking care was 'unmanly' and therefore unacceptable. This helped them change their image of appropriate male identity, making it more rounded. Counselling, coupled with participation in a number of decisions that the management was taking about school administration,

also made students trust the teachers and school staff in general and feel a sense of ownership of the school. Corporal punishment was strictly banned and that too made students feel more secure and cared for. As a result of these measures, students started interacting better with teachers and participating in school activities more openly and willingly. Given the family background of most boys in this school, with many of them coming from single-parent households and lacking care and attention at home, the support from school was important. It had a positive impact on their attendance as well as their performance.

One of the limitations witnessed in the school was that the experiences have not been integrated into main curricular practices and most classes continued to follow the traditional lecture format, with little space for student expression through various means. There was no evidence of children's work on the walls, the classrooms were dark and bleak, and outside of sports the boys had few outlets to channel their emotions and creativity.

...with strong leadership and appropriate strategies, schools can make a difference even in situations that appear to be most difficult and daunting.

CONCLUSIONS

The case study of this school within the frame of the CFW project shows that, with strong leadership and appropriate strategies, schools can make a difference even in situations that appear to be most difficult and daunting. Within the school a set of strong rules coupled with measures that encouraged more participation helped students change their attitude and behaviour, indicating that strict rules can be effective if they are implemented in the right mix. The school functioned within a project that promoted sharing, cooperation, mutual learning, experimentation and continuous growth, breaking its isolation and inertia. The same principles were applied in strategies adopted at school level that helped in reducing the boys' alienation from school and education processes. The school focused on management-related reforms and succeeded in bringing about change to a large extent. It is also clear, however, that the change would be more sustainable and effective if these reforms were combined with pedagogical reforms based on similar principles, as was apparently evidenced in some other schools that were part of the project.