

INTRODUCTION

The Roving Care-givers Programme (RCP) Saint Lucia chapter is still in its fledgling stage. Since the inception of the project in June 2004 a number of lessons have been learnt and a number of changes have been undertaken. The most significant being the dismissal of the then project Co-coordinator in **January, 2005.**

As a result the project went through a transition phase, whereby the Chairperson of the RCP Management Committee, Mrs. Marguerite Gustave, had to fill in and offer direction to ensure the continuity of the project.

Subsequently, Mrs. Ruth Phillips Fevrier was asked to serve as the defacto Co-coordinator pending approval from the Cabinet of Ministers.

This report is intended to provide Committee members with an account of what has transpired for the period February to April, 2005.

PROGRAMME UPDATE

Major Achievements:-

This project continues to be very dynamic in nature and requires constant monitoring and evaluation in order to make the necessary changes or adjustments to ensure the project's effectiveness and sustainability.

1. Launch of Roving Caregivers Programme Saint Lucia Chapter

The Roving Caregivers Programme Saint Lucia Chapter was officially launched in Saint Lucia on Tuesday 1st February, 2005 at the Green Fields Inn, Dennery under the theme: **“Community Togetherness: Let's Begin with Our Children.”** The approximately One and a half hour programme was attended by

Mr. Huub Scheurs, Senior Programme Specialist attached to the Bernard Van Leer Foundation (BVLF), Miss Susan Branker, Project Director, Caribbean Support Initiative (CSI), Ms. Fortuna Anthony-Husband, Chief Education Officer, Representatives of the local funding Agencies viz: Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF) and the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF), members of the RCP Management Committee, parents and children involved in the programme from the targeted communities of Monchy, Riviere Mitant, Aux- Lyons, Dennery Village and La Caye and the community Caregivers (Rovers and Supervisors). (See Appendix I)

The rather formal occasion was marked by addresses from the various funding Agencies both International and local, who reiterated their commitment to and financial support for the project. The Rovers, in particular, were exhorted to remain focused and to give of their best as they were charged with the responsibility of making a positive difference in the lives of the children and their parents in the programme and by extension the community and the nation of Saint Lucia.

The gathering was reminded by Mr. Huub Scheurs that his organization, BVLF, was not only interested in providing financial support, but more importantly in helping to build human capacity and thereby increase the social capital of the island.

A number of presentations were done by the parents, children and the Rovers.

The highlight of the ceremony was the commissioning, by Miss Susan Branker of CSI, of the fifteen (15) Rovers-three (3) males and twelve (12) females into the

project as the selected community care-givers for the first phase of this, two phase implementation, three (3) year pilot project.

The official ceremony was followed by a short reception at which light refreshments were served.

2. Meeting with members of the Bruce Ville Community Committee

One of the communities to be included in the second implementation phase of the RCP is the community of Bruce Ville in Vieux-Fort. As result two (2) persons from the RCP Management Committee Mrs. Marguerite Gustave and Mrs. Ruth Phillips Fevrier attended a strategic planning meeting with the members of the Bruce Ville Community Committee. The meeting was held on Friday 18th February, 2005 at the Vieux-Fort Primary School at 7:00 p.m. Representing the Bruce Ville Community Committee were: -

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Mr. Augustus Cadet: - | CDO for Vieux-Fort South and Chairperson of the Bruce Ville Committee |
| Ms. Margaret Laurent:- | A.K.A. Maggie – A resident and influential member of the Bruce Ville Community. |
| Ms. Flora St. Aimee:- | Community Health Aide |
| Ms. Veronica Wilkinson:- | Community Health Aide |
| Sister Elma Gustave:- | Representing the Catholic Community |
| Jahnil Hunte:- | Resident of Bruce Ville and Secretary to the Committee |
| Joseph Antoine:- | Founder of Steer Them Straight Ministries |
| Ricky Etienne:- | Police Officer attached to the CRB Unit. |

Dalson Jules:-**Resident**

This meeting proved to be extremely encouraging and mutually rewarding. The Committee was established in 2004 and all persons volunteered their services to assist with the implementation of the programme in Bruce Ville. Thus far, the Committee has held a few meetings to discuss its contribution towards the programme.

Consequently, the committee has been able to:-

- Identify persons as potential Rovers and these names have been submitted to the Early Childhood Unit.
- Introduce the supervisor for the Area, Mrs. Coletta Auguste Johnney, to the Community.
- Identify families/households for inclusion into the programme
- Formulate a sensitization and public awareness plan for the entire Community.

Two (2) critical areas of concern for Committee members were:-

- The quality of Rovers – based on the nature and dynamics of the Bruce Ville Community it was the unanimous feeling of the Committee that preference should be given to more mature/older persons to serve as Rover.
- That the sensitization of both the immediate and wider Community is key to the success of the programme.

The meeting lasted for approximately two (2) hours. The RCP Management Committee Members thanked the Bruce Ville Committee for their keen and enthusiastic support and encouraged them to keep mobilizing the residents of

Bruce Ville and to continue working closely with the Management Committee and the other persons involved in the project namely: the supervisor and Co-ordinator.

Members of the Community Committee were also asked to think about possible income generating projects which could be embarked upon when the programme is established in Bruce Ville.

3. Two (2) Day Retreat

Based on certain developments among the various persons involved in the programme-Supervisors, Rovers, Management Committee- it was deemed necessary to host a two (2) day Retreat on Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th March, 2005 at the Bay Gardens Hotel, Rodney Bay, Gros Islet. The objectives of this Retreat were:-

- To provide all persons involved in the programme with an opportunity to re-focus and re-commit to the programme
- To provide an open forum for Rovers and Supervisors to express and discuss any issues/concerns/challenges which they have and might be affecting their attitude and work performance.
- To clarify any mis-conceptions and/or mis-information with respect to the project – its structure, status and management procedures and administrative/operational systems.
- To continue the training of the Supervisors and Rovers in identified areas of weakness.
- To restore a sense of unity and loyalty to the implementation and continuity of the RCP in Saint Lucia.

Consequently, the services of a number of persons were co-opted, based on their knowledge, expertise and experience, to serve as Resource Persons for the training component of the workshop. (See Appendix II for an outline of the Retreat).

It was the general feeling that the Retreat achieved its objectives and set the platform for moving the project forward. All concerned appeared to be re-energized. Morale was high and persons now had a better understanding of and appreciation for the programme, and were thus more prepared to go out into the different communities to conduct the home visits with the parents and children.

4. Study Visit to RUFAMSO-Jamaica

Training continues to be seminal to the successful replication and implementation of the RCP. Consequently, a four (4) day intense study visit was organized for persons involved in the RCP to witness and experience the RCP in action. Ten (10) persons participated in this training Exercise which was held in Maypen, Clarendon, Jamaica from April 4-8, 2005. Participating territories included Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and Grenada.

The Saint Lucian delegation comprised the RCP Co-coordinator and the four (4) Supervisors attached to the project. Other participants included one (1) Supervisor from Grenada, two (2) Supervisors from Saint Vincent and two (2) of the evaluators attached to the CSI Evaluation team.

The Study Visit comprised both, theoretical and practical sessions (See Appendix III). The Practical component involved going out into some of the communities where the programme is being conducted and observing the

Rovers at work. The theoretical sessions were conducted at RUFamSO which is the Rural Family Support Organization – A NGO dedicated to **“helping rural communities experience a strengthened family base and the best possible quality of life.”**

This Study Visit proved to be an extremely enlightening and rewarding experience. We got the opportunity to witness, share and experience first hand both the managerial/administrative implementation components of the RCP. This served to clear up any mis-conceptions, clarify/explain any issues which were not fully understood and also served as a source of motivation and encouragement. Some of the critical lessons learnt as a result of the Study Visit were:

- The quality of the programme is largely dependent on the training and supervision that is provided. Training is the bedrock of the programme, it is continuous and happens at all levels.
- Documentation, Monitoring and Evaluation are critical factors for the continuity and sustainability of the programme.
- Networking with other children and family based Agencies is imperative. It was emphasized that the main role of the RCP is to provide stimulation to young children, parenting education to parents and to serve as a referral point to other child welfare and social Agencies in order to address the **“high risk”** situations in which some of these families live.
- Parents need to organize themselves into parent groups within the various communities and not simply attend parent meetings. The

purpose of these parent groups is to bring the parents together once a month to increase their knowledge on Child Development, to share experiences and to collectively develop in-come generating activities.

- Supervisors need to be highly skilled and competent. Must possess strong inter and intra-personal skills. Must be able to conduct training sessions for both the Rovers and the Parents involved in the programme. Must be knowledgeable about Child Development, The Philosophy of Early Childhood Education and other related Early Stimulation issues.
- Acceptance of the Programme at the community and national levels is critical to its success and sustainability. Therefore, creative ways have to be found to involve the various groups in the different communities to take ownership of the Programme and to get the Government to invest more heavily and the Corporate sector to support and invest in the programme.

5. Revision of Programme Planning Matrix (PPM)

As part of the implementation process each island in which the RCP is being replicated was required to compile a Programme Planning Matrix (PPM) which would serve as a blue print or road map to direct and guide the programme over the initial pilot phase.

Upon review of the PPM prepared and submitted to CSI by Saint Lucia, it was advised that in order to make the proposed target dates and indicators used to measure or evaluate the success of the programme more realistic and achievable, the document should be revised.

Consequently, with assistance from the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer attached to PRF, the PPM was re-visited and specific amendments made. The revised PPM was then re-submitted to CSI. (Please see Appendix IV)

6. Work Quality Assessment

As the programme continues to evolve there has been some definite signs of improvement with respect to the performance and competence of the Rovers and Supervisors.

The Rover and Supervisors continue to demonstrate a reasonably satisfactory level of enthusiasm and commitment to the programme. It is evident that the Rovers are having a positive impact on the young children in the programme, as well, as the communities in which they serve. The fact that the children seem to be enjoying the home visits is testimony to this.

Nevertheless, one major hindrance which is impacting negatively on the professional development of both the Rovers and to a greater extent the Supervisors is the tendency to indulge in idle gossip about each other viz Rover to Rover, Supervisor to Supervisor and in some instances Supervisor to Rover. Although this matter has been addressed in various fora and at different times the tendency still persists and this unsavory trait continues to be a source of concern, as it undermines the integrity of the Programme.

However, in general the programme is gaining the acceptance of the families and the Rovers and Supervisors appear to have a better understanding of their role(s) and responsibilities.

To date, two Rovers namely Miguel Noel and Ernetta Sealy left the programme in February and April respectively. For both persons the withdrawal of their

services was as a result of their families providing them with the opportunity to migrate and reside in England and Canada respectively.

Arrangements are already being made to have them replaced. However, in the interim the families concerned have been re-distributed among the remaining Rovers for the communities of Aux Lyons and Dennery Village.

Also twenty (2) new families have been included in the programme – seventeen (17) from Dennery Village and five (5) from Aux Lyons.

To date there are One Hundred and Sixty (160) families and Two Hundred and Fifty (250) children in the programme.

7. Successes

A few of the successes of the

Programme include:

- Commitment of Rovers and Supervisors to the programme.
- Increased sense of responsibility – Rovers, Supervisors.
- Improvements in self-esteem – Rovers, Supervisors, Parents.
- Expressions of satisfaction – community members, parents.
- Support and enthusiasm from community committees.
- Contracted services of local media correspondent to assist with P.R.
- Increase in public awareness and demand for programme within target communities and environs.

8. Challenges

With successes come challenges some of these are:-

- A need to foster better inter/intra personal skills among Rovers as team members and between Rovers and parents.
- On-going need for structured training to address problem areas identified by Rovers and Supervisors.
- Unwillingness of some parents to accept parenting advice and information from the “Youthful Rovers.”
- Extent of coverage for Supervisors in the various communities poses difficulty as the communities particularly in the Dennery region are wide-spread.
- Transportation - poor public service or in some instances the service is non-existent. Also the cost to the supervisors are substantial.
- Supervisors have to use their personal cell phones to contact the Rovers under their supervision. The frequency of these calls is proving to be quite costly to the Supervisors.
- Absenteeism by parents.

9. Projections/Summary of Work

Over the up-coming quarter May to July, 2005 a number of activities are being organized which are all geared towards improving the knowledge, skills and competencies of all the persons involved in the RCP. These are:-

- A. A proposed Peer Exchange Programme. In this peer exchange the islands of Dominica and Saint Lucia have been twined and likewise the islands of

Saint Vincent and Grenada. The peer exchange has been conceptualized to give a pair of Rovers at a time from the twined islands, the opportunity to visit their counterpart Rovers for a period of one (1) week, as part of a study tour.

In the light of this, it is being proposed to CSI through the Regional Learning Network (RLN) that the first peer exchange between Saint Lucia and Dominica be held during the month of June, 2005.

Consequently, a number of arrangements will have to be made such as:

- (1) Criteria for the selection of the two (2) Saint Lucian Rovers will have to be outlined and agreed upon
- (2) Accommodation and meals arranged
- (3) A schedule of activities for the week drawn up.

A budget for hosting the study visit will be submitted to Mrs. Joyce Jarrett/RLN Coordinator.

- (B) As part of the on-going training organized by the RLN for the successful implementation/replication of the RCP a meeting/training workshop for Supervisors from all the replicating territories is ear-marked for the month of July, 2005 in Saint Lucia. No definite date has been agreed upon. The training programme and other relevant details will be provided by the RLN Co-coordinator Mrs. Joyce Jarrett.
- (C) The Caribbean Internship project (CIP) and Co-coordinators Meeting
A meeting for all Co-coordinators of the various projects

supported by BVLFF/CSI has been scheduled for April 24-28, 2005 in Trinidad at the Kapok Hotel. Consequently, permission has been granted to Mrs. Ruth Phillips Fevrier to attend the meeting.

(D) Training (In-House)

Training continues to be the bed-rock of the RCP. Based on the identified needs of both the Rovers and the Supervisors a training programme for the next three (3) months has been drawn up to address these areas with a view to increasing the knowledge, skills and competencies of the Rovers and supervisors. (See Appendix V)

(E) Implementation of second phase of RCP

- Recruitment of additional Rovers
- Training of fifteen (15) new Rovers
- Continued sensitization of new communities
- Commissioning of new Rovers

(F) Continued training for Rovers and Supervisors

(G) Increase public awareness at community and national levels

(H) Forging of links to improve networking with other

Agencies/Ministries concerned about the welfare of children and families Forge partnerships with the corporate sector.

CONCLUSION

Changing demographic, social and economic circumstances have brought an increase in both the need and demand for programmes attending to the care and development of young children.

Care consists of the actions necessary to promote survival, growth and development. Caring for children involves responding to their basic needs. Nevertheless, the basic needs of development go beyond the boundaries of protection, food and health care to include the need for affection, interaction, stimulation and security provided through consistency, predictability, and play allowing exploration and discovery.

These needs are intertwined and form the basis for the child's holistic development. A supportive environment and cohesive approach is essential if we are to respond effectively to the needs of all children both individually and collectively. Hence the Roving Care-Givers Programme (RCP).

The challenge we face in programming for child survival, care and development is at once immediate and long term. Viewed from the stand point of intellectual, social and emotional development this earliest period in life has been neglected. Furthermore, the fact that development is so closely tied to health and nutrition in these early months and years, it is imperative that we create innumerable opportunities for incorporating a psychosocial dimension into ongoing early stimulation, health and nutrition programmes.

The Roving Caregivers programme is designed to achieve this by enhancing the income earning capacity of families particularly women in low income and single

parent conditions and simultaneously enhance their parenting skills by engaging them in activities designed to stimulate and increase the learning capacity and abilities of their children.

In capsule the words of basket ball star Ervin “Magic” Johnson succinctly articulates the thinking behind the RCP:

*“All kids need is a little help, a
Little hope and somebody who
believes in them.”*

10. Recommendations

Based on discussions and experiences shared the following suggestions are proposed for consideration by the Management Committee.

- Develop and conduct a series of training sessions geared towards enhancing the inter/intra personal skills of Rovers and Supervisors.
- Further sensitize the persons in the various communities through the use of focus group meetings on the roles and benefits of the RCP.
- Devise new forms for gathering data on the families in the programme in order to obtain a more comprehensive family profile.
- Explore the possibility of collaborating with the different telephone companies to negotiate concessions for cell phone calls/cards for the Supervisors
- Institute a mechanism/strategy for providing Supervisors with a fixed monthly travel allowance.