Organization of American States

OASIS

OAS ORCHESTRA PROGRAM FOR YOUTH AT RISK IN THE CARIBBEAN

FINAL REPORT

JULY 2012

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MUSIC
FOR SOCIAL
CHANGE

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BACKGROUND

In June 2009, the Organization of American States (OAS) started OASIS, a pilot orchestra program for youth at risk in the Caribbean (Haiti, Jamaica and Saint Lucia). The Program was financed by the OAS member countries and permanent observer governments in partnership with the local public and private sectors. Alliances where made with local governments and prominent music schools in each country to supervise the Program, and with public schools to host the centers.

Classes began in November 2009 and three orchestral and choral training centers were created in high risk urban areas: at the Ecole de Musique Sainte Trinité in Port-au Prince, Haiti; at the Saint Andrews Technical High School in West Kingston, Jamaica; and at the Marchand Elementary School in Castries, Saint Lucia. Each center has one general coordinator, 7 instructors, and an average of 80 beneficiaries from 10 to 18 years old. The participants receive group lessons in orchestra, choir, instruments, voice, and music theory 2 hours a day from Monday to Friday.

The Program is an adaptation of Venezuela's National System of Youth Orchestras (FESNOJIV), a pioneering initiative that has provided musical training to over two million Venezuelans. This experience has led other countries such as Colombia, Ecuador and Chile to successfully implement similar programs. The OAS instructors receive regular training from FESNOJIV and other like-programs.

The instruction method integrates theoretical, instrumental, orchestral practice and performance from the outset. Group work ensures that participants get involved in joint activities from the very moment they enroll. Students engage in instruction collectively, which is not the case in other traditional teaching methods. The method ensures also early and continued exposure to great music works and seeks continuous contact between beneficiaries and their community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In June 2009, the Organization of American States (OAS) started OASIS, a pilot orchestra program for youth at risk in the Caribbean (Haiti, Jamaica and Saint Lucia).

- The instruction method integrates theoretical, instrumental, orchestral practice and performance from the outset.

- The main goal of the OASIS program evaluation was to understand the impact of OASIS on students' lives. More specifically, this assessment was focused on determining the effects of OASIS on school performance, emotional regulation, risky behaviors and social capital.

- Overall, the preliminary analyses suggest that the OASIS pilot Program is highly beneficial for students that participate in it. This is evident in most areas examined.

- In only 18 months, the program has increased its students' educational aspirations and it has increased the skills needed to succeed in the academic world. This includes increased strength to suspend immediate distractions that would otherwise derail them from getting their work done and an increased ability to complete projects in time.

- The OASIS program is also associated with students' increased self-confidence in being able to concentrate while doing their homework and in being able to stay out of fights. In Jamaica, OASIS students reported using less alcohol and marihuana than non-OASIS participants.

- In Haiti, OASIS students improved their relationships with their parents and guardians. These participants were also more likely to practice sports than non-OASIS ones.

- Responses at the 6-month follow-up also showed positive indicators of improvement in all areas surveyed.

- At this time point, OASIS students also reported less incidences of becoming angry, reduced aggressive behaviors and less involvement with delinquent peers.

- Other variables where analyzed but did not show evidence of results and where not included in this report (e.g. misconduct, connectedness to teachers and schools, and average grades reported by students).

- Relatively low participant retention across data collection waves may have affected the power of the statistical tests used to analyze these data. Therefore, it is conceivable that some results appear non-significant as a result of this methodological shortcoming.

- It should be noted that there were serious problems in retaining OASIS and non-OASIS students across the three waves of data collection. Therefore, it is likely that some results appear to be non-significant due to the relative small sample size.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The main goal of the evaluation was to understand the impact of OASIS on students' lives. More specifically, this assessment was focused on determining the effects of OASIS on school performance, emotional regulation, risky behaviors and social capital. This program was evaluated at every step of its implementation.

The evaluation utilized a quasi-experimental design, in which there a pre-test and two post-test surveys were administered to both OASIS and non-OASIS (i.e. control) students. OASIS students voluntarily registered for the program. Thus, student distribution between OASIS and non-OASIS groups was not randomized. The lack of random assignment to either group prevents this evaluation from being categorized as a randomized controlled trial, or a traditional experiment. In other words, even though the current report shows strong suggestive evidence that the OASIS program is beneficial for its students, no strictly causal inferences can be made.

Baseline, 6-month and 18-month follow-up surveys were administered to OASIS students and non-OASIS students. Information from Saint Lucia was insufficient at the time of this report, so the data from that country was excluded from this evaluation.

The students

Students in the OASIS group attended the program at the Ecole de Musique Sainte Trinité in Port-au Prince, Haiti; at the Saint Andrews Technical High School in West Kingston, Jamaica; or at the Marchand Elementary School in Castries, Saint Lucia.

Non-OASIS students who participated in this evaluation attended the same schools as the OASIS participants. Efforts were made to recruit control groups with similar gender/age distribution as in the OASIS groups. *Table 1* shows the total amount of students who participated in both surveys by country and by OASIS/Non-OASIS status.

Every student who participated in this study was required to obtain parental permission (*see Appendix A*) before being administered the surveys and prior to requesting their academic records.

Table 1. Group sizes

Country	Students	Baseline	6 months	18 months	Completed 3 surveys
Haiti	OASIS	69	55	55	40
	Non-OASIS	42	76	55	20
Jamaica	OASIS	64	77	87	6
	Non-OASIS	52	32	78	1
St. Lucia	OASIS	41	23	26	15
	Non-OASIS	45	19	22	14

Table 2. Gender distribution

Country	Students	Gender	Baseline	6 months	18 months	Completed 3 surveys
Haiti	OASIS	Male	26	22	26	14
		Female	43	33	29	26
	Non-OASIS	Male	0	32	27	0
		Female	42	44	28	20
Jamaica	OASIS	Male	15	25	45	0
		Female	49	52	42	6
	Non-OASIS	Male	25	18	47	1
		Female	27	14	31	0
St. Lucia	OASIS	Male	14	7	13	4
		Female	27	16	13	11
	Non-OASIS	Male	18	9	7	5
		Female	27	10	15	9

Table 3. Age distribution for OASIS and non-OASIS participants

Country	Students	Baseline mean (min-max)	6 months mean (min-max)	18 months mean (min-max)	Completed 3 surveys mean (min-max)
Haiti	OASIS	15 (9-23)	15 (7-23)	17 (12-25)	16 (12-25)
	Non-OASIS	13 (8-18)	13 (9-18)	16 (9-19)	15 (12-17)
Jamaica	OASIS	11 (7-18)	11 (8-18)	13 (10-21)	12 (10-13)
	Non-OASIS	11 (8-16)	11 (8-14)	13 (9-20)	N/A
St. Lucia	OASIS	13 (9-18)	13 (10-17)	14 (11-18)	15 (11-18)
	Non-OASIS	12 (10-17)	11 (10-14)	13 (12-16)	14 (12-16)

Survey Administration

BASELINE SURVEY

The baseline survey was administered to OASIS and non-OASIS students in January and February 2011 in Jamaica and St. Lucia. In Haiti, the survey was administered in March 2011. This was due to an *a priori* decision to administer the survey after Haiti's presidential elections were concluded.

In Jamaica, surveys were administered to all students (OASIS and non-OASIS) at their respective schools in a group format. In St. Lucia and Haiti, surveys were administered to OASIS students at the OASIS program site in a group format, while surveys were administered to non-OASIS students at their schools, also in a group format.

Surveys were first read aloud by an evaluator in order to increase comprehension and help students with reading difficulties. Students were reminded that there were no wrong or right answers. When students submitted their completed survey, survey responses were double checked to ensure that students did not accidentally skip a question or section. If they had skipped questions intentionally, however, the evaluator accepted the partially incomplete survey (*Appendix B*).

Figure 1. Major surveyed themes

See the survey in *Appendix B* to specifically see the questions asked for each topic area.

6-MONTH FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

In Jamaica and Haiti, the 6-month follow-up survey was administered in June of 2011. In St. Lucia it was administered a month later. The format in which these surveys were administered was identical to the format of the baseline survey, described in the previous paragraph. Recruiting the same participants who completed the baseline survey was a main goal at this stage.

18 MONTH FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

The 18-month follow-up survey was administered between May and June 2012. This third wave of surveys followed the administration guidelines developed for the first two surveys. This final questionnaire included most items from the previous surveys but also added new components (*Appendix C).* New sections were added on self-regulation (i.e. concentration, impulsivity, delayed gratification, etc) and on smoking, drug and alcohol use.

RESULTS

The data collected through the surveys was used to assess the impact of the OASIS program. Two main types of comparisons were made: (1) between OASIS and non-OASIS students; and (2) changes within each OASIS student. Whenever possible, these two types of comparisons were combined to create a complete assessment of the program's impact.

Given that each country showed dissimilar recruitment success (i.e. participant retention throughout survey waves) and demographic characteristics (*see tables 1-3)*, a joint analysis of all OASIS students was not performed. Data from each country was thus analyzed separately. Therefore, in this report the results of the program are segmented by country. Lastly, given that follow-up participant recruitment in Saint Lucia was low for proper statistical analyses, the reports on that country are limited to qualitative data.

Saint Lucia's low population (less than 175,000 according to the 2010 census) predicted since the beginning lower enrolment of beneficiaries than in the other two countries. In addition, the program experienced some dropouts during its execution; due in part to instability caused by the unexpected retirement of both the director of the School of Music and the Project Coordinator.

Although the number of beneficiaries at the original center in Marchand is still low (around forty), beneficiaries from three new centers that have been created under the Mamay La Di Way project, a government commitment to expand the program to a national level, should be considered in future data collections.

Jamaica

The program in Jamaica was launched at Saint Andrews Technical High, a West Kingston school located in Tivoly Gardens, a common scene of confrontation between gunmen and security forces, and the home of the drug lord Christopher 'Coke' Dudus, whose extradition to the US lead to the 2010 Kingston unrest. Frequent violence related incidents in the area surrounding the school have had a negative effect on the program's enrolment, and have led to numerous dropouts.

Thankfully, the program has been managed since its inception by the National Youth Orchestra of Jamaica, a strongly committed NGO which has already been able to ensure the program's sustainability, and has also secured its expansion to a second center in Kingston College, East Kingston. This new center has been able to ensure a much larger enrolment and fewer dropouts since its opening a year ago.

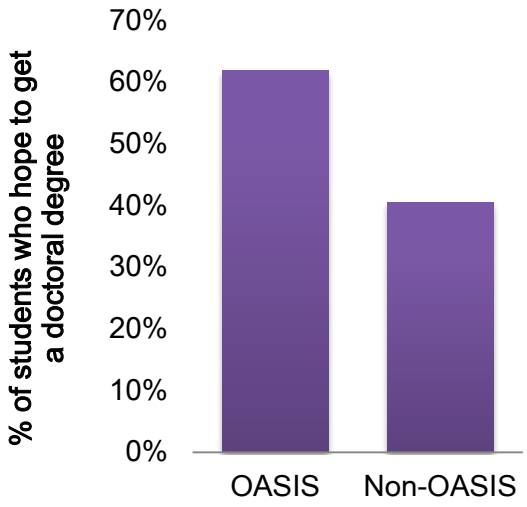
RESULTS AT 18 MONTHS

By the end of the evaluation, Jamaican OASIS students showed a distinctly positive overall pattern compared to non-OASIS participants. This difference was evident in virtually all surveyed behavioral and attitudinal dimensions.

Educational aspirations

The first area in which the impact of the OASIS program could be observed is in the students' educational aspirations. When asked *if it were up to you, how far would you like to go in school?* 62% of OASIS students expressed hopes to receive a doctoral degree, whereas only 41% of their non-OASIS counterparts did (*figure 2*).

Figure 2. Educational aspirations

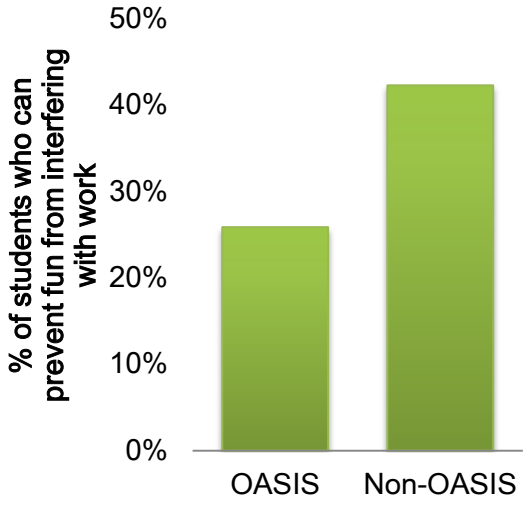


Self-regulation

Another key area surveyed at the 18-month follow-up survey was self-control as it affects different motivational, attitudinal and behavioral processes. For instance, while only 7% reported saying inappropriate things, 21% of non-OASIS participants agreed with this statement.

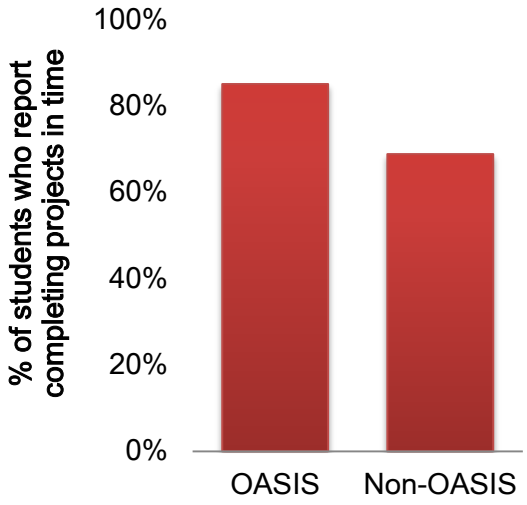
More importantly, the OASIS program affected students self-discipline to achieve their goals. OASIS students were significantly less likely to report that *pleasure and fun* keeps them from *getting work done* (26% vs. 42%; *figure 3*).

Figure 3. Pleasure and fun keep me from getting work done



Similarly, OASIS students were less likely to report procrastinating when doing school projects (*figure 4*). Procrastination not only relates to self-discipline and being able to "say no" to events and people that prevent someone from completing a task, but it also is influenced by attentional and motivational processes. Not being able to maintain one's attention on a specific task usually is expressed as procrastination. Furthermore, the inability to focus on a task not only depends on the normal development of attentional processes but also on an appropriate level of motivation.

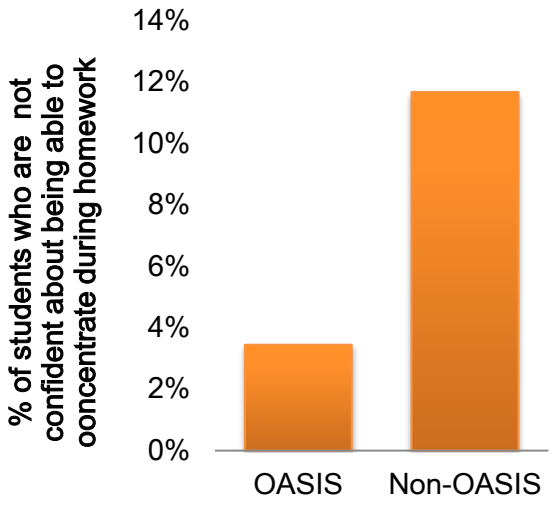
Figure 4. Complete projects in time



Self-efficacy

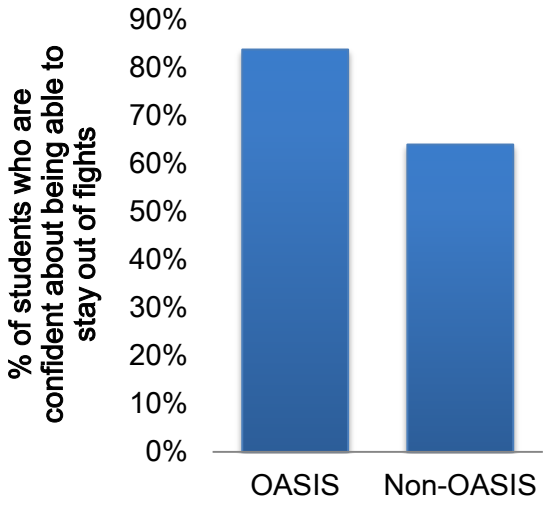
As suggested in the previous paragraph, procrastination is closely related to being able to concentrate, which in turns also depends on motivation. One of such motivational processes that predicts success at most tasks is self-efficacy (i.e. confidence in being able to successfully perform a task or behavior). OASIS students show an overall greater level of confidence in being able to concentrate while doing their homework (*figure 5*).

Figure 5. Concentrating when doing homework (confident)



Self-efficacy is an important predictor of most changes in behavior. This extends beyond procrastination to drug use and other habitual behaviors. One such example is responding to frustration or anger with violence. When compared to non-OASIS participants, OASIS students showed increased self-efficacy to *stay out of fights* (*fugre 6*).

Figure 6. Stay out of fights (confident)



Addictive behaviors

The 18-month follow-up survey also included items related to alcohol and drug use. OASIS students reported lower consumption of both alcohol and marihuana during the 3 month period prior to the final survey (*figures 6 & 7*).

Figure 7. Used alcohol (3 months):

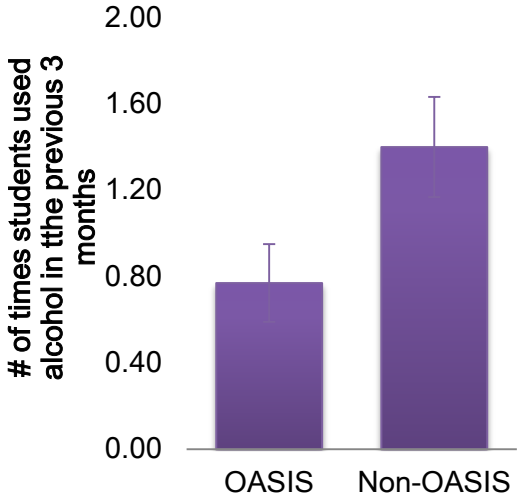
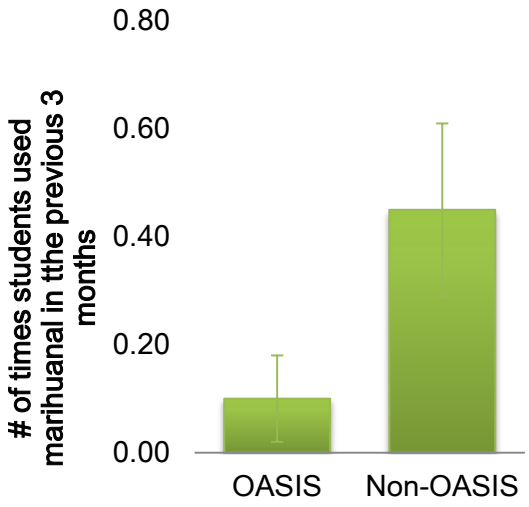


Figure 8. Used marihuana (3 months):



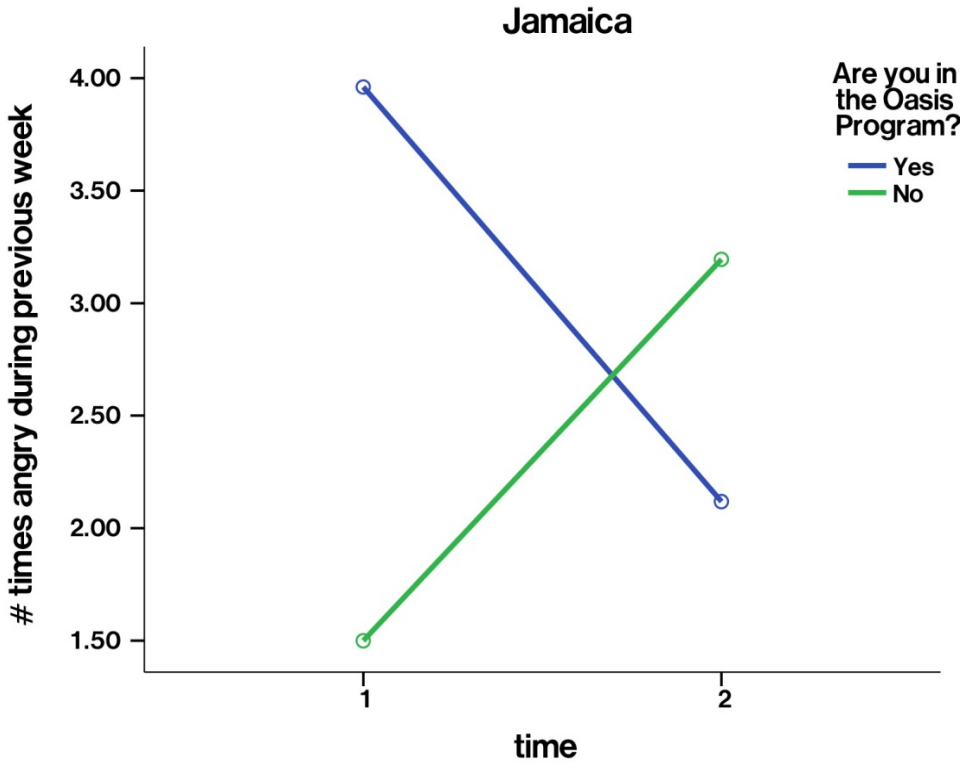
RESULTS AT 6-MONTHS

The longitudinal progression of the program's impact on several outcomes could be evaluated by examining differences between baseline and 6 months. This temporal comparison allows examining the distinct trajectories on various dimensions between OASIS and non-OASIS students.

Anger

Students were asked the number of times they got angry easily with someone during the past 7 days. Response options ranged from 0 = Never, to 6 = Six or more. Statistical analyses showed that there were significant differences between the OASIS and non-OASIS students on their self-reported anger over time (OASIS status x time: $p<0.0001$), as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 9. Anger



Aggressive Behaviors

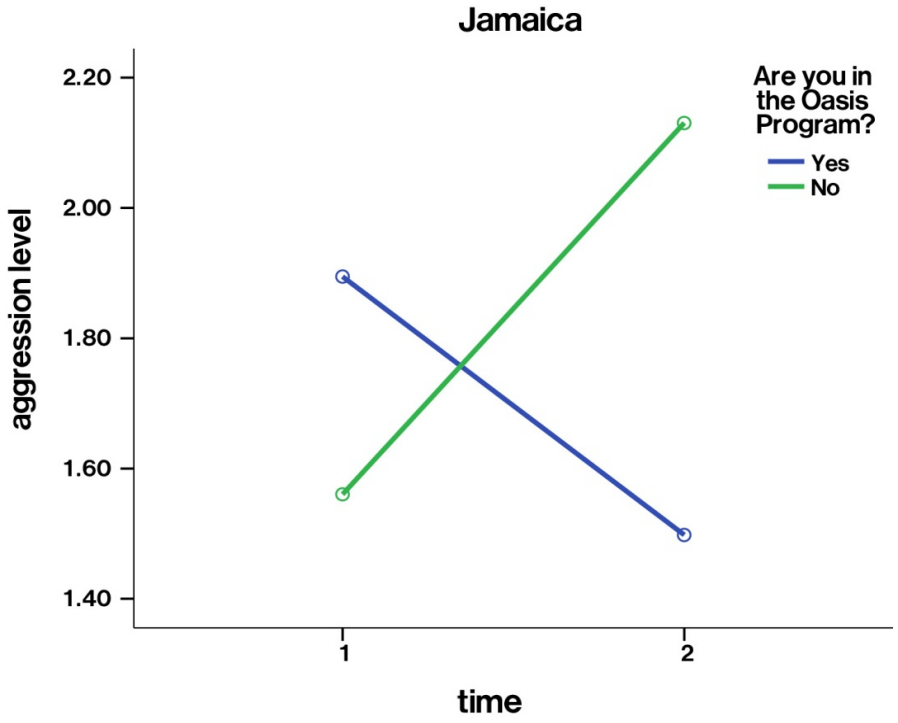
Students were also asked about the frequency with which they had engaged in aggressive behaviors during the past 7 days. Examples of aggressive behaviors are, "I teased students to make them angry," "I got into a physical fight because I was angry," and "I slapped or kicked someone." Responses ranged from 0 = 0 times to 6 = 6 or more times. Higher scores on this scale mean that students are engaging in aggressive behaviors more frequently (Table 4).

Table 4. Aggressive behavior questionnaire

During the last 7 days…	0 times	1 time	2 times	3 times	4 times	5 times	6 + times
I teased students to make them angry.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
I got angry very easily with someone.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
I fought back when someone hit me first.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
I said things about other kids to make other students laugh.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
I encouraged other students to fight.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
I pushed or shoved other students.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
I was angry most of the day.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
I got into a physical fight because I was angry.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
I slapped or kicked someone.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
I called other students bad names.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+
I threatened to hurt or hit someone.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+

Statistical analyses also showed that there were significant differences between the OASIS and non-OASIS students on their self-reported aggressive behaviors over time (OASIS status x time: $p<0.05$), as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 10. Aggressive behavior



Association with Delinquent Peers

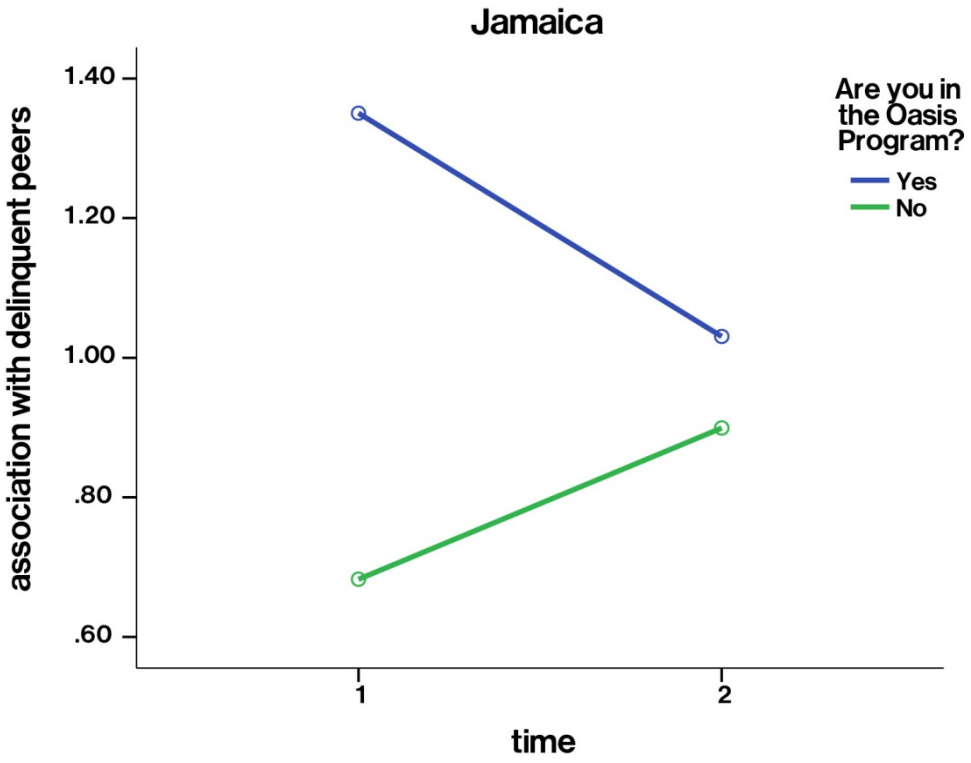
This peer risk factor assesses students' knowledge of their friends' involvement in vandalism, violence, and drug use during the last 3 months. Students were asked to report how many of their close friends had engaged in delinquent and high risk behaviors. For example: "During the past 3 months, how many of your friends have purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to them?" Response choices ranged from 0 = *None of them* to 4 = *All of them.* Higher scores on this scale indicate a greater association with delinquent peers (Table5).

Table 5. Association with delinquent peers' questionnaire

	None of them	Very Few of them	Some of them	Most of them	All of them
1. Purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to them?	0	1	2	3	4
2. Hit or threatened to hit someone?	0	1	2	3	4
3. Used alcohol?	0	1	2	3	4
4. Sold drugs?	0	1	2	3	4
5. Gotten drunk once in a while?	0	1	2	3	4
6. Carried a knife or a gun?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Got into a physical fight?	0	1	2	3	4
8. Been hurt in a fight?	0	1	2	3	4

Statistical analyses showed that there were significant differences between the OASIS and non-OASIS students on their association with delinquent peers (OASIS status x time: p=0.057), as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Association with delinquent peers

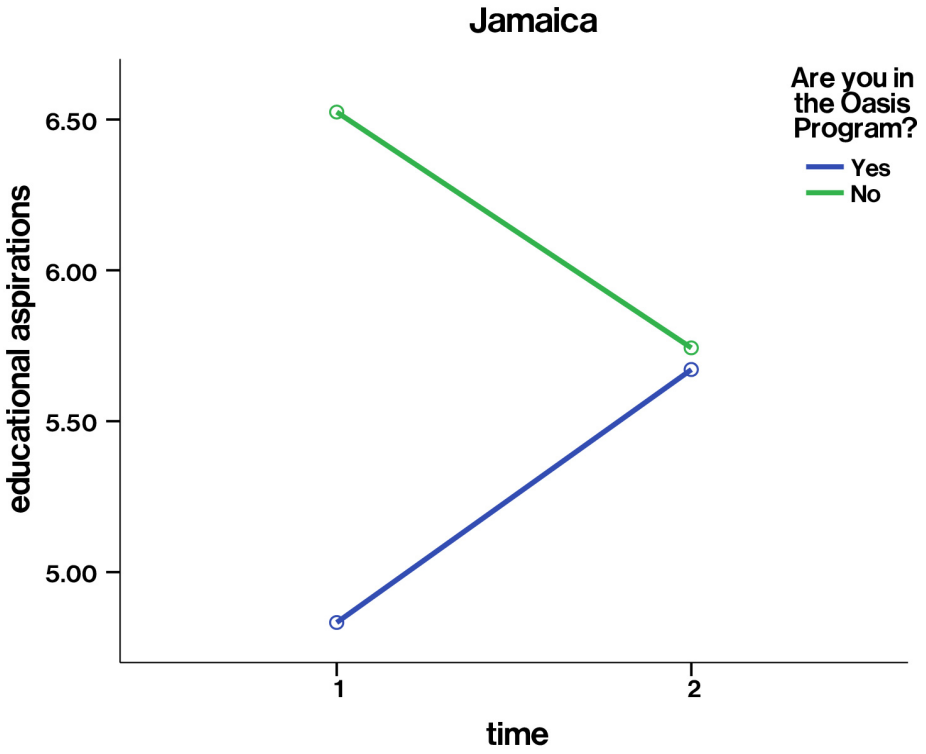


EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Students were asked how far they would like to go in their education (aspirations). Choices vary depending on each country's educational systems, ranging from 1 = *Less than a high school graduate/secondary school/senior primary,* to *7= PhD or Professional degree.* Higher scores mean higher aspirations.

Statistical analyses showed that there were significant differences between the OASIS and non-OASIS students on their educational aspirations (OASIS status x time: p=0.087; OASIS attendance x time: p<0.01), as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Educational aspirations



5= College degree; 6= Masters Level, 7= PhD or Professional degree

HAITI

The local executing agency and home of the program in Haiti is the Ecole de Musique Saint Trinité, a school of music associated with the local and the US's Episcopal Church's. Saint Trinité has been able to withstand the country's historical political instability and offer uninterrupted education for more than 30 years.

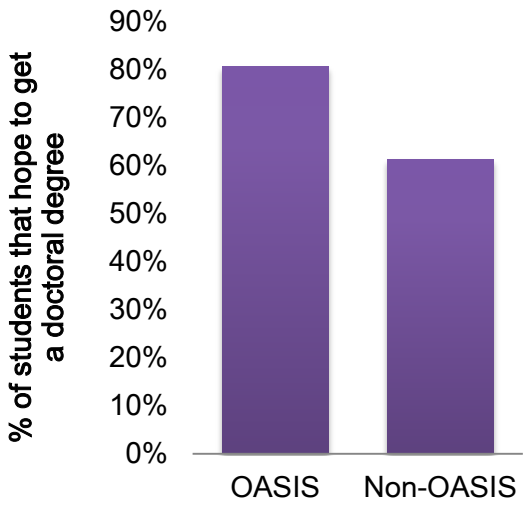
Although the earthquake signified a mayor trauma for the school, whose building and auditorium were destroyed, the program had been able to resume activities in only two months. Since then, classes took place regularly with very few dropouts, and with a steady and proficient team of instructors.

RESULTS AT 18-MONTHS

Educational aspirations

In Haiti, the OASIS program also increased its students' educational aspirations. Eighty percent of OASIS students expressed hopes to receive a doctoral degree, whereas 61% of their non-OASIS counterparts did (*figure 11*).

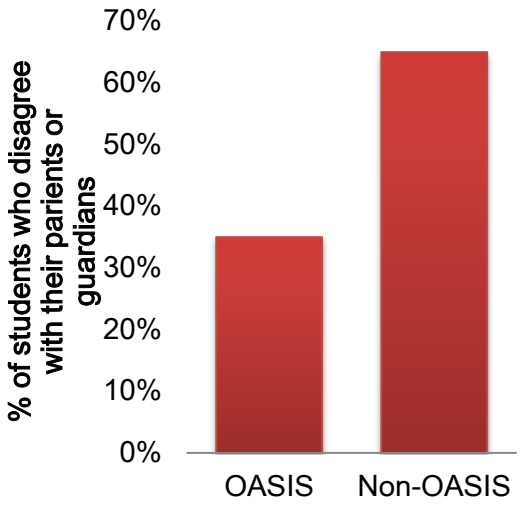
Figure 11. Educational aspirations



Disagreements with parents and guardians

Disagreements with adults are an important source of stress during adolescence. They can increase psychological distress which may lead to serious psychiatric disorders (e.g. anxiety and depression) and also to compensatory behaviors which may include alcohol and drug use, as well as violent outbursts. Additionally, quarrels with adults sometimes brings about defiant attitudes and behaviors which seek breaking societal norms.

Figure 12. Disagreement with parents or guardians

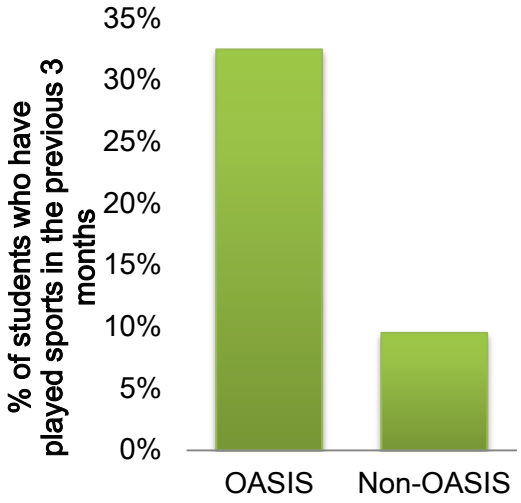


Physical exercise

The lack of physical activity is associated with a wide array of medical problems, ranging from obesity to cardiovascular disorders and cancer. Moreover, physical exercise has been recently linked to increased academic performance. That is, after a brief exercise session students who exercise in the morning outperform their peers in mathematics and other academic tasks.

In adolescents, physical activity has other associated benefits. As a healthy energy outlet, it may reduce violent behaviors. Additionally, as adolescents become more engaged in physical activities, these practices become increasingly incompatible with the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Therefore, sports have the potential to act as primary and secondary prevention strategies to reduce the prevalence of addictive behaviors.

Figure 13. Sports practice



RESULTS AT 6-MONTHS

Anger

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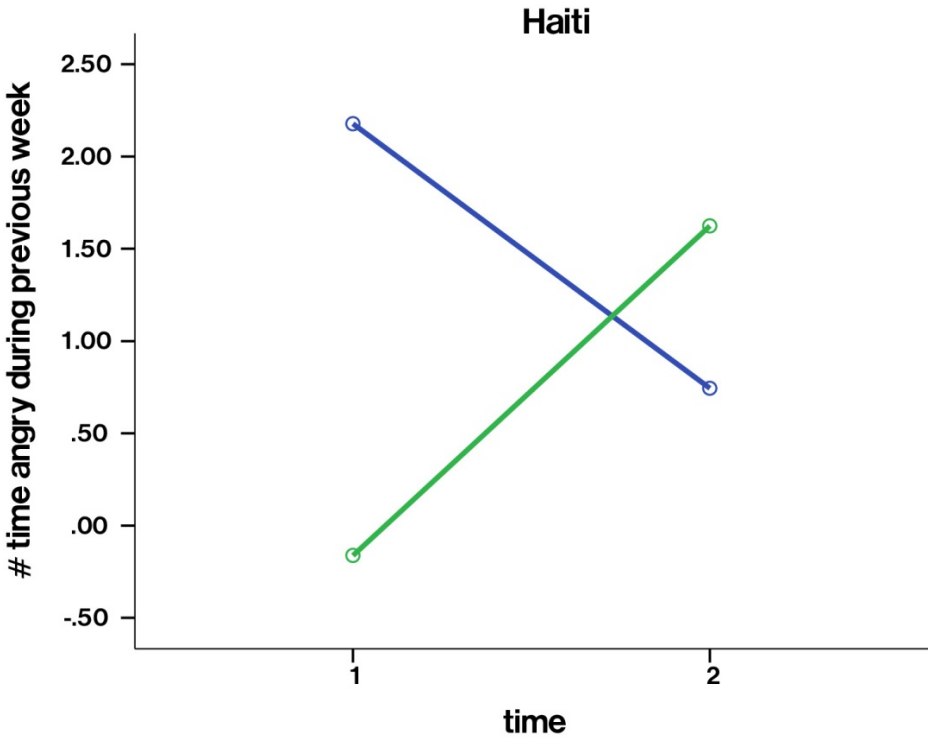

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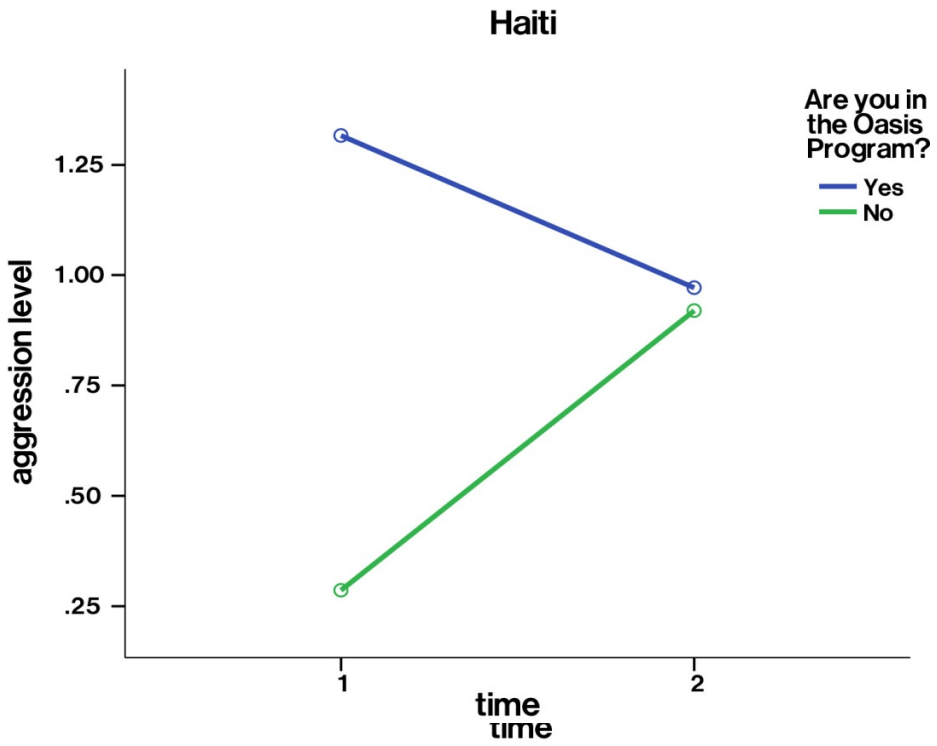
Figure 10. Aggressive behavior

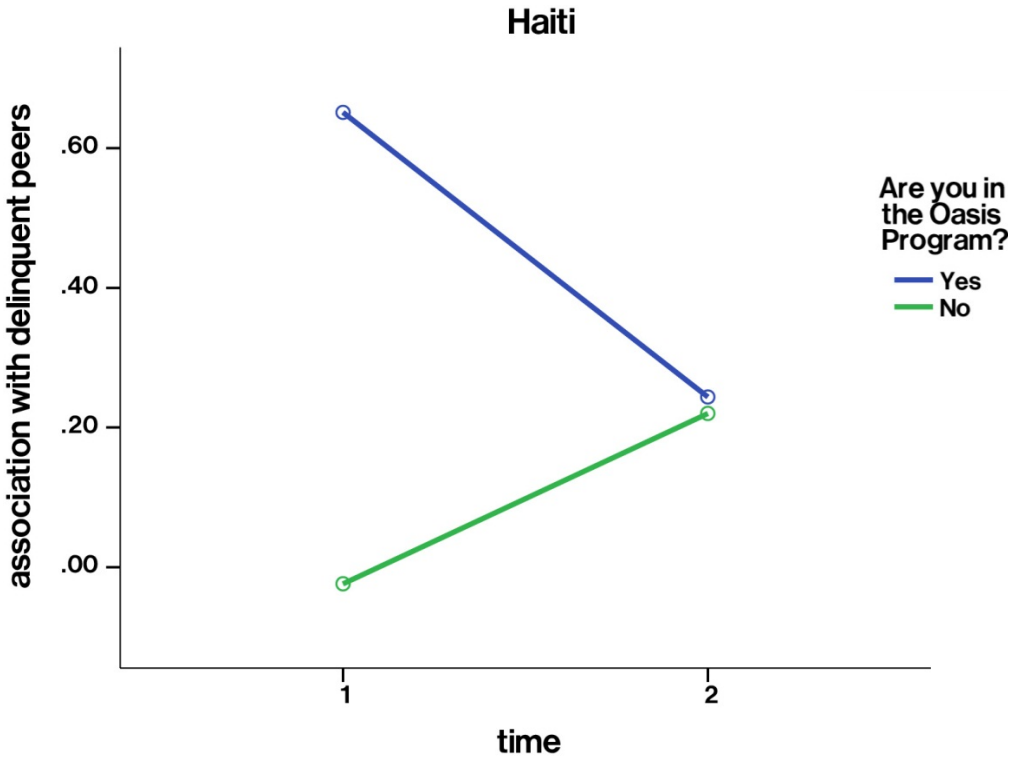


Association with Delinquent Peers

This peer risk factor assesses students' knowledge of their friends' involvement in vandalism, violence, and drug use during the last 3 months. Students were asked to report how many of their close friends had engaged in delinquent and high risk behaviors. For example: "During the past 3 months, how many of your friends have purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to them?" Response choices ranged from 0 = *None of them* to 4 = *All of them.* Higher scores on this scale indicate a greater association with delinquent peers (Table5).

Statistical analyses showed that there were significant differences between the OASIS and non-OASIS students on their association with delinquent peers (OASIS status x time: p=0.057), as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Association with delinquent peers

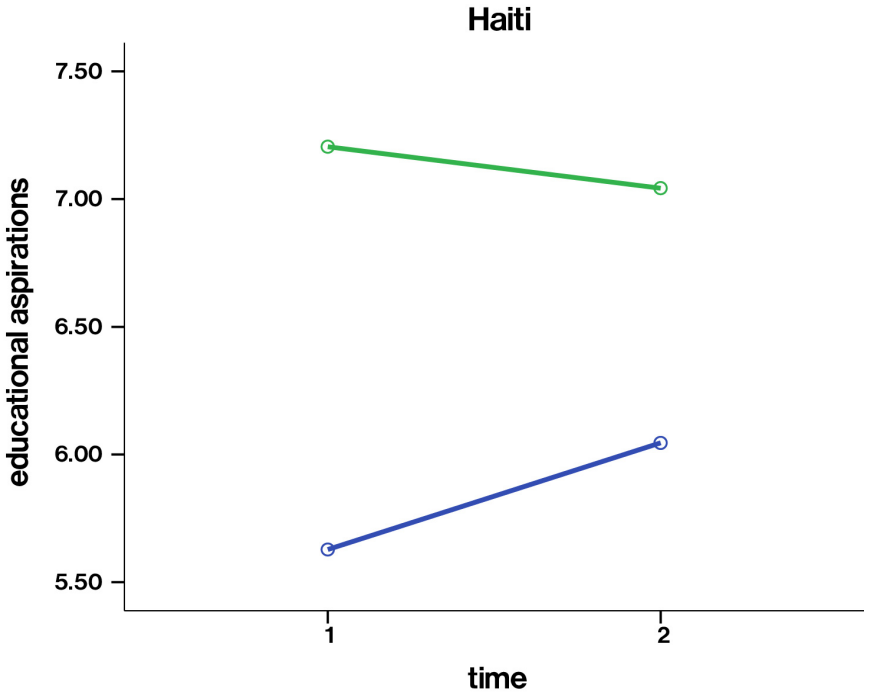


EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Students were asked how far they would like to go in their education (aspirations). Choices vary depending on each country's educational systems, ranging from 1 = *Less than a high school graduate/secondary school/senior primary,* to *7= PhD or Professional degree.* Higher scores mean higher aspirations.

Statistical analyses showed that there were significant differences between the OASIS and non-OASIS students on their educational aspirations (OASIS status x time: p=0.087; OASIS attendance x time: p<0.01), as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Educational aspirations



5= College degree; 6= Masters Level, 7= PhD or Professional degree

Summary of findings

Overall, these analyses suggest that the OASIS pilot Program has been highly beneficial for students. This is evident in most areas examined. In only 18 months, the program has increased its students' educational aspirations and it has increased the skills needed to succeed in the academic world. This includes increased strength to suspend immediate distractions that would otherwise derail them from getting their work done and an increased ability to complete projects in time. The OASIS program is also associated with students' increased self-confidence in being able to concentrate while doing their homework and in being able to stay out of fights.

In Jamaica, OASIS students reported using less alcohol and marihuana than their non-OASIS counterparts. In Haiti, OASIS students improved their relationships with their parents and guardians. These participants were also more likely to practice sports than non-OASIS ones. Responses at the 6-month follow-up also showed positive indicators of improvement in all areas surveyed. At this time point, OASIS students also reported less incidences of becoming angry, reduced aggressive behaviors and less involvement with delinquent peers.

Other variables where analyzed but did not show evidence of results and where not included in this report (e.g. misconduct, connectedness to teachers and schools, and average grades reported by students). It should be noted that there were serious problems in retaining OASIS and non-OASIS students across the three waves of data collection. Therefore, it is likely that some results appear to be non-significant due to the relative small sample size.

FOCUS GROUPS AND STUDENTS' NARRATIVES

There were a total of 9 focus groups conducted across the 3 Caribbean countries. In total, 5 parents, 3 students, and 1 staff members participated in focus groups. Overall, each focus group had from 1 to 28 individuals (*Appendix D)*. Some focus groups only had 1 individual, which made it a one-on-one interview instead because the person could not make the group session. A staff focus group was conducted at the annual OAS meeting, which took place in Jamaica. Thus, staff members from Jamaica, Haiti, and St. Lucia participated in one focus group, as well.

What students have gained from the program

AN ENGAGING CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVITY

Students, parents and staff reported that students not only gained musical abilities, but also became interested in music, particularly classical music. Parents discussed how much students enjoyed learning music and spending time in the Program, and that their children were given an opportunity they could not have afforded. They also noted that the Program occupies them with a positive activity that keeps them away from risk situations. Staff noted that, through music, students gain a quick sense of accomplishment that stimulates them to remain in the Program. The following are quotes from students and parents:

> "It allows me to explore other music, to learn about music" (Jamaica student)
>
> "I enjoy singing because…when I grow up I can be a singer" (Jamaica student)
>
> "I get a passion and feeling inside of me, sir, because I feel love around me. It's peaceful and quiet. So I enjoy it a lot" (Jamaica student)
>
> "It gives me something to do instead of being at home, laying down, watching TV" (Saint Lucia student)
>
> "Takes kids off the road, give them something to do" (Jamaica parent)
>
> "Keeps them out from [the] violence of the world" (Jamaica parent)

BEHAVIOR IMPROVEMENT

Parents, students and staff reported that the Program improved students' behavior in a number of areas, including:

- More self-confidence and motivation
- Better social skills (cooperation, teamwork, communication, etiquette, respect for authority)
- Better school skills (ability to focus and pay attention, grades, time management)
- Less aggressive behaviors (anger, fights)

The following are some quotes by Jamaica and Saint Lucia students, parents, and staff:

> "I learned how to be…respectful to my parents" (Jamaica student)
>
> "…to have respect for myself and my teachers…and I'm thankful for them" (Jamaica student)
>
> "…helped me to be less angry" (Saint Lucia student)
>
> "…to stop fighting" (Jamaica student)
>
> "Performing in public makes our children feel more confident about themselves" (Saint Lucia parent)
>
> "…better work at school, more focus in success and better achievement" (Saint Lucia parent)
>
> "My daughter used to fight a lot and now she is calmer and more settled down" (Jamaica parent)
>
> "Students are…helping each other" (Jamaica staff)
>
> "At the beginning of January, we were having a hell on earth trying to get [students] to stay still for at least 2 minutes…and it's just amazing to see them grow into respectable young people…" (Jamaica staff)

COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK

Focus group participants also noted that strong positive relationships had arisen between students and their instructors. In Jamaica, students hug their instructors every time they see them. According to a Saint Lucian instructor, students "come to your house, they follow you home, they call you all the time." Students feel they count with their instructors' support, and that they can trust them with their problems. Furthermore, some parents often call instructors to find out what their children are up to. Students' relationships with one

another also improved. Jamaican staff discussed that students were able to overcome rivalries among them because they had to work together as a team in order to be part of an orchestra. They also discussed that the Program allowed students to meet new people, see new places, and in some cases even allowed for peaceful coexistence between rival communities.

> "It really does help with social acceptance…to interact with other people and know how to, you know, get their point across without fighting or physical use" (Jamaica staff)
>
> "[They are] like a family now. They really want to know what's happened to someone in the class if they don't come…" (Haiti staff)
>
> "The children perform in different places, meet new people" (Jamaica parent)
>
> "We meet important people" (Jamaica student)
>
> "It's good to see kids playing together across social and political boundaries in Jamaica. Different communities typically don't mix but they do in this Program" (Jamaica staff)

After the Haiti earthquake, students sought support from their instructors. Many of them had lost their homes, friends and family. During such times, the Haitian staff was able to restart the Program soon after the earthquake, and provide children with sense of normality.

"Most of the students came and brought their friends. Students and teachers listened to one another. We shared experiences because we had to talk about that. […] we listened to each other and sometimes cried together…it was very touching to listen to them and for the kids to see the courage… [although] they have more courage than you do…"

Areas of the Program in Need Improvement

ACCESS TO COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAMS (E.G., COUNSELING)

Staff members discussed extensively the extent to which their students trust them with their personal and mental health problems, and that many of them want to help but feel overwhelmed.

"You are placed in that child's care…you have to be a friend and you have to learn how to handle sensitive situations" (Jamaica staff)

OTHER STUDENTS GET IN THE WAY OF LEARNING

Students expressed they were concerned about other students' disruptive behavior interfering with their learning. Some of those students' reported attitudes included arriving late, fighting in class, and not taking proper care of their instruments.

"To stop fighting" (Jamaica student)

"Students need to have respect for their teachers" (Jamaica student)

"Provide more strict rules within the Program" (Jamaica student)

"Children who play instruments should not eat anything because if they touch the instruments with their dirty hands then they will ruin the instruments" (Jamaica student)

"Put out of the Program those students that are not committed to learn" (St. Lucia student)

"We never start on time, there are always students coming late and we have to wait for them to start playing" (St. Lucia student)

NEED MORE RESOURCES

Students, staff and parents discussed that more resources would help improve the Program's quality. Parents and students requested more and better quality instruments, additional music theory classes, one-on-one lessons, and more snacks. Some parents suggested that more field trips would provide their children with concert experience and expose them to other musicians and musical events. Saint Lucia students mentioned they wanted the Program to have its own building (the Program takes place at an elementary school).

"…giving us more resources, or getting more sponsors, that can help the Program grow a lot" (Jamaica student)

"We need a change sometimes. The kids know that the Program doesn't have much money but it would be nice to get more resources for the Program" (Jamaica student)

"By having more teachers and, as I said before, more resources like instruments, spaghetti and pizza" (Jamaica student)

"More music theory classes to understand the notes. About once a week or twice a week" (Jamaica student)

"Diversity of instruments and activities" (Saint Lucia parent)

"Better quality strings" (Saint Lucia student)

TRANSPORTATION

Jamaican parents and students agreed that commute from and to the center needed to be improved. Staff and parents suggested that a bus fare would allow beneficiaries to participate more regularly and decrease the number of classes that begin late due to tardiness. Some Jamaica parents discussed that the commute was too long and jeopardized their children's participation. In contrast, the Program in Saint Lucia takes place at a school at a convenient location; transportation is not a problem there.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Parents suggested that the staff needed to improve their communication with them. They also mentioned that the Program is not well advertised, that some of them found out about it word-of-mouth, and that a better marketing strategy would help raise awareness. A parent shared that he learned last minute about a concert his child was performing at, and that a concert flier would have helped him arrange his schedule to attend the performance. Parents also stated that it would be beneficial to be informed about their children general schedule of activities.

STUDENTS NARRATIVES

In Saint Lucia, narratives written by OASIS were collected. In some way, these reflect a summarized and non-primed version of the impact of the OASIS program in its students' lives:

STUDENT A:

The instrument of my choice became the violin, although it was quite challenging to play and thoughts of quitting was frequently on my mind, I endured the hardship and persevered and focused entirely on my success and joy of playing music.

STUDENT B:

Before I became a member of the Marchand Youth Orchestra my life was becoming increasingly boring. I would spend my afternoons after school and weekends longing for something interesting and meaningful to engage in. During this weakened state of mind it would have been very easy to fall under bad influences and cause mischief. It was then [when] something extraordinary [happened]. I heard that an after school program was coming to my community. I just couldn't help but sign-up. You see, I always have had a deep passion for music, both for the singing and the playing aspect but could never express my passion because I was never given such opportunity.

Upon our first sessions playing our instruments, I realized that playing the viola, which I had chosen, came naturally to me. After playing for a couple of weeks my life was finally looking up, not only had my school grades increased but I was making new friends who were also in the program. Currently, I am improving my playing skill and it is steadily increasing day by day. To keep playing is my main goal in life, and to do so as long as I can, or as long as I live.

STUDENT C:

The Marchand Youth Orchestra has taught me many life lessons, like being considerate to others…Instead of causing all sorts of havoc, [new students] would be using their time wisely…

STUDENT D:

The initiative to from MYO is to me, probably one of its best decisions and the most promising. Other than its endeavors to spread the joy of music, it has also helped to get young people involved in something useful, productive and fun. The young people involved feel a sense of belonging as they are a part of something that is much bigger than them. The tutors at MYO have been both dedicated and hard working as being a teacher cannot always be an easy task. I believe that MYO is an initiative that can grow and soar to new heights as it gains more skilled and dedicated tutors and students who are ready and willing to learn. It would be an honor and both a personal fulfillment to assist and contribute to the success of MYO and to help it reach its full potential. Throughout the short time I have been playing music, it has made such a positive impact on my life. Not just in the technical aspect of playing but as a young lady in Saint Lucia and in the world. It has opened me up to so many different experiences different places as well as meeting new and interesting people. It has definitely helped me to become a better-rounded person by all the people who have pushed me along in my musical endeavors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this report can be divided into two categories: (a) those related to the OASIS program itself; (b) and those pertaining the evaluation and data collection. Recommendations on what to change in the program are very well reflected in students, parents, staff members' and program directors 'comments. Those related to the program evaluation and data collection are the outcome of the quantitative analyses of the data collected during the first 18 months of the program.

Program recommendations

Staff expressed concern about the number of personal and mental health problems that their OASIS students' tend to experience. They believe these may undermine the way students benefit from the program. Therefore, staff members were very interested in devising a way to obtaining counseling referrals for their students.

The need for more human, material and financial resources was a recurring theme in focus groups with staff members. They considered that more resources would improve the quality of the program, it would improve participant retention and it would allow for better communication and marketing strategies. The latter point is essential to widening the reach and increasing the sustainability of the OASIS program.

Parents also expressed interest in improving the communication channels with OASIS staff. They expressed desire to being able to better follow-up in their children's progress, learning how to help them through the process, and knowing about OASIS events. Parents' involvement and participation in the program is an essential component in improving the overall retention of students.

OASIS students expressed concern about the misbehavior of other fellow OASIS students. They reported that some students' behavior interferes with their learning. This legitimate concern may be addressed by clearly defining inclusion criteria (e.g. limits on violent/behavioral antecedents) and rules for being able to stay in the program.

The onsite evaluators observed that although the OASIS program is one, the program actually varies by country. Each country has its own culture and context that makes each program unique. For instance, Haiti is still dealing with the aftermath of the earthquake in 2010. Thus, the students' problems (e.g., trauma, loss of family members, lack of housing) seem even greater compared to the problems of students in Jamaica and St. Lucia. Further, because of the issues that students in Haiti are dealing with, what they gain from the program is different from Jamaican and St. Lucian students. For instance, the program in Haiti provides students with a sense of normalcy and stability that they do not have otherwise in their lives. This theme was not discussed in Jamaica and St. Lucia. Another area of difference is that the OASIS program is conveniently located at students' schools in St. Lucia whereas most students in Jamaica have to commute after school to get to their program. There were many questions raised in Jamaica about how best to deliver the program (e.g., 3 days versus 5 days/week) in order to enhance the attendance of students in the program.

Practice Recommendations

Define the target audience. Consider whether the OASIS program is targeting the right age groups. For instance, the average age of OASIS students in Jamaica is about 11 years old, in Haiti about 15, and in St. Lucia about 11. Further, the ages of students in the OASIS programs across the 3 countries is as young as 7- to as old as 23-years-old. Is the OASIS program created for these particular age groups? Program staff should consider who their target group is and recruit those students. If such wide age span should be a part of the planned recruitment strategy, efforts to maximize the program's benefits to students at each group should be devised.

Marketing and Communication. Provide more communication between the program and parents, as suggested in the focus groups. Moreover, communication efforts should also be considered as part of the recruitment efforts for both prospective staff and students. Lastly, marketing strategies should be set in place to increase funding, public opinion and political support for the program.

Attendance monitoring. Staff in Jamaica was consistently taking attendance in the OASIS program, but that was not the initial case in St. Lucia and Haiti. Taking attendance is essential to evaluate which students are consistently attending, and thus, assess the true effectiveness of the program. Consistent attendance is the best way to ensure that students obtain the benefits of the program. Further, attendance varies considerably by students. Thus, it is possible that the goals of the OASIS program are not being achieved because students are not consistently attending the program.

Reconsider the Goals of the OASIS Program. The current goals of the OASIS program are to prevent violence and school dropout through after school music education. It would be helpful for directors and staff to consider whether these are in fact the long-term goals of the program. Further, it would be helpful for OAS and OASIS staff to set immediate and intermediate and long-term goals. In other words, in order to prevent violence and school dropout, what types of changes should we observe in students before those long-term goals are achieved. For instance, focus group participants discussed that students became more interested in classical music and that their music skills improved. Perhaps could be the short-term goals of the program. Another possible short-term goal is enhancing the self-esteem of students, as discussed in the focus groups. The third wave of data collection reflected the inclusion of self-regulation as short- and intermediate-term goals of the program. Determining the short-, intermediate, and long-term goals of the program would help staff take the necessary steps to improve the program towards such goals. Further, clearly defining these goals will help design future outcome evaluations.

Evaluation Recommendations

Monitor Program Indicators. An important evaluation step that could be strengthened is to continuously monitor various program indicators, such as students' daily attendance, the number of practices that take place, the number of concerts and attendance to those concerts, and records of the content and attendance for any other program activities. This would be helpful in understanding how the program can be improved and why the program outcomes were may be better achieved by some students than others.

Conduct a Process Evaluation. Process evaluations help assess whether, when and how program activities take place. It also helps monitor the program's effects on various stakeholders' (e.g., students, staff, parents, funders) perspectives. In other words, it is critical to stress whether the program is taking place in the intended and planned manner. This perspective allows for the identification of barriers as they are taking place. Process evaluations should take place independently from an outcome evaluation, but should always precede it.

Fidelity evaluation. Another important aspect of evaluating a program is to assess whether the planned activities match those that are actually taking place. The fidelity evaluation can be considered an essential aspect of any process evaluation. Fidelity assessments are useful to find the delicate balance between a program that follows a sole manual and local adaptations that reflect local cultures and personnel's idiosyncrasies. The search for common denominators among the different ways a program is implemented in each country is necessary for the identification of the programs ingredients that are leading towards the

intended outcomes. To this end, it is also recommended that staff defines the bridge between the goals of the program (e.g., prevent violence) and the program activities.

Participant retention. One of the biggest obstacles in assessing the program's impact was participant attrition. That is, most students evaluated during the baseline measure were not part of the evaluation 18-months later. A significant number of evaluation drop-outs seriously undermine the possibility of evaluating the impact of the program over time. From a methodological perspective, this is the most important shortcoming in the current evaluation.

Improved survey administration. The current quantitative data shows that some students did not properly understand how to complete the surveys. Thus, some cases display large numbers of missing data. Moreover, this problem was not uniform across countries. Whereas, students in one country failed to understand a set of instructions, others in a different program seemed to miss a different set of items. This problem calls for the improvement and standardization of survey administration procedures.

CONCLUSIONS

- Overall, the preliminary analyses suggest that the OASIS pilot Program is highly beneficial for students that participate in it. This is evident in most areas examined.

- In only 18 months, the program has increased its students' educational aspirations and it has increased the skills needed to succeed in the academic world. This includes increased strength to suspend immediate distractions that would otherwise derail them from getting their work done and an increased ability to complete projects in time.

- The OASIS program is also associated with students' increased self-confidence in being able to concentrate while doing their homework and in being able to stay out of fights. In Jamaica, OASIS students reported using less alcohol and marihuana than their non-OASIS counterparts.

- In Haiti, OASIS students improved their relationships with their parents and guardians. These participants were also more likely to practice sports than non-OASIS ones.

- Responses at the 6-month follow-up also showed positive indicators of improvement in all areas surveyed.

- At this time point, OASIS students also reported less incidences of becoming angry, reduced aggressive behaviors and less involvement with delinquent peers.

- Other variables where analyzed but did not show evidence of results and where not included in this report (e.g. misconduct, connectedness to teachers and schools, and average grades reported by students).

- Low participant retention across data collection waves may have reduced the likelihood of finding a greater number of significant associations between the program and the measured outcomes.

- It should be noted that there were serious problems in retaining OASIS and non-OASIS students across the three waves of data collection. Therefore, it is likely that some results appear to be non-significant due to the relative small sample size.

- In addition, focus group findings suggest that the OASIS pilot Program also provides the following benefits:

    - More self-confidence and motivation
    - Better social skills:
    - Cooperation
    - Teamwork
    - Communication
    - Etiquette
    - Respect for authority
    - Better school skills:
    - Ability to focus
    - Grade improvement
    - Better time management
    - A protective social network

- These findings imply that the Program provides with a valuable tool to help reduce several factors associated with at-risk behaviors among youth, and also with essential skills applicable to the labor market and the school-to-work transition.

- Given the experience gained by OAS through the implementation of this pilot through the past three years, coupled with its leverage at a national and regional level which gives it a comparative advantage over other agencies, the OAS has the unique capacity to promote, facilitate and support policy and programs in member states for the implementation of similar projects.