



Children First Agency

**Narrative Report for the Period:
7 July to 14 Nov 2012**

Vendor ID: 317725
Project Name: Youth MSM Empowerment Project
Submitted to: UNESCO, Paris HQ, 7 Fontenoy, 75007 Paris, France
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Introduction

This partnership with UNESCO dubbed Children First “*Youth MSM Empowerment Project – YMEP*” is being undertaken from the Agency’s Mobile Reproductive Health and Information Service the Bashy Bus HQ - A Safe Space for Vulnerable Children and Young People - in Kingston, Jamaica.

Preparations for this project commenced during the summer period of 2012 with the major activities being implemented between September to November 2012. To date the intervention has been very instrumental in providing the MSM peer educators and its target audience with additional information and resources to assist them in making informed health decisions.

The following provides an update of the progress that has been achieved under each component to date.

Objective 1: *To strengthen knowledge and skills of our target group (50 MSM aged 17-25 years old) on HIV/AIDS and other STI’s*

Activity1: Develop youth friendly drama presentation: **Activity Status: Complete**

A 20 minute youth friendly presentation has been developed in consultation with the Children First Mobile Reproductive Health Information Service – Bashy Bus peer educators and seeks to utilise the performing arts – particularly drama, poetry and songs – to promote and create an awareness of MSM issues. This presentation was developed based on focus discussions with youth representatives of the MSM population where they highlighted the issues that they have experienced and continue to endure in some instances.

Activity 2&3 Performance of drama & Audience Interaction **Activity Status: In Progress**

A series of pilot testing of the presentation was done at 2 secondary schools (*1 rural and 1 urban*) with various youth audiences as well as 2 distinct groupings of MSM’s and the feedback was very encouraging - as the audience related that the messages were quite clear and the issues brought to the fore were “true-to-life”. These pilot tests brought to the fore the importance and ongoing need for psychosocial testing and support especially amongst the MSM groupings, as the presentations created the space for them to articulate their issues and question where they can go to get support/assistance.

On the other hand, the sensitization of the stakeholders grouping has been postponed to the upcoming reporting period, since even though plans were in place for this activity, a national furore in the Ministry of Education with respect to its Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) Curriculum which included reference to same sex partners - created major discomfort amongst our targeted stakeholders and as such a decision was taken to undertake the activity once some level of normality had returned amongst the target group.

Activity 4: Empowerment Sessions with MSM: **Activity Status: Complete**

For the period July to October 2012 a series of MSM empowerment sessions have been undertaken impacting 66 individuals under this activity. For each batch, the sessions began with a focus group discussion in order to better understand the issues that impact and affect the MSM community and the issues that this new batch of participants experience. The main topics covered for the period included Self Efficacy; Advocacy and Risk Reduction Conversations – specifically condom negotiation, Sensitization to VCT, Advocacy, Sexuality, Basic HIV/AIDS facts, Stigma and Discrimination HIV/AIDS/STI transmission and prevention, treatment and care; Additionally, one-on-one sessions have been convened with all 66 youth as part of the overall development planning process and are held at the end of each batch of training.

Overall, the sessions were very participative and provided the opportunity to dispel myths, clarification, discuss issues relating to “anal hygiene”, created a space to examine future plans and streamline refer to national vocational training programmes such as HEART/NTA. Finally these empowerment sessions served as a catalyst in preparing them for the Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) in screening HIV/AIDS and STI’ test.

Activity 5: VCCT Test: **Activity Status: Complete**

A total of 36 of the 66 MSM participants accessed the VCT component of this project. Each participant engaged in Pre and post test counselling and those who tested positive were referred and subsequently accompanied by a Children First team member to the public health clinic that has responsibility in the Kingston Metropolitan Region for HIV Treatment and Care.

Objective 2: *To build the capacity of 20 key stakeholders to better relate to and interact with MSM, through targeted intervention*

Activity 1: Focus Group Discussions with MSM **Activity Status: Complete**

This activity was undertaken with the total group of 66 youth MSM’s who were engaged in the MSM Empowerment Training Sessions for the period July to October 2012, and served to provide the baseline information, which was required to devise the intervention to make it culturally appropriate while addressing the emerging issues and trends.

Activity 2: 1 Workshop with Key Stakeholders **Activity Status: In Progress**

This activity will be undertaken in the upcoming reporting period based on the challenges outlined in objective 1

Activity 3: 1 Workshop with MSM & Stakeholders **Activity Status: In Progress**

This component has been scheduled for the next reporting period

Activity 4: Develop health care providers listing **Activity Status: Ongoing**

This aspect is ongoing and will be finalized in the latter part of the project period

Objective 3: *To increase the availability of psycho-social support services for young MSM through advanced peer educators training for 10 MSM*

Activity 1: Advanced Peer Education Sessions

Activity Status: Complete

A total of **17** MSM have participated in the Advanced Peer Education training with **16** successfully completed the process. So far, they have been offering support to their peers; interestingly they have also been volunteering to assist with the ongoing MSM Empowerment training sessions, which provide the opportunity for them to hone their peer education skills.

Additionally, they have also been actively engaged in recruitment of new recruits for training and are in the process of finalizing an advocacy campaign aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination amongst the target group. The training has however, been very integral in the young MSM's overall development and has enhanced the young men's self esteem and sense of purpose.

Activity 2: Conduct Pre and Post Assessment

Activity Status: Complete

This activity was completed and when compared the participants knowledge base has increased by over 60%.

Activity 3: Risk Reduction and Self Empowerment Sessions

Activity Status: Complete

This activity is also complete and was undertaken as part of the overall peer education training programme. It provided the opportunity for self assessments, introspection and future planning with respect to risks and the impact it has on their health. Overall there has been reported increase in condom usage amongst the target group as well as increased discussions with their partners on the issues.

Activity 4: Mobilization of New MSM's

Activity Status: Ongoing

This is an activity that is ongoing. The advanced trained peer educators as well as those participating in the MSM Empowerment Sessions have been recruiting and mobilizing additional participants for the sessions based on the positive impact the sessions have had on their overall well being

Conclusion

All-in-All, this project is very instrumental in the advancement of the Agency's work in relation to MSM Empowerment - particularly at the outreach centre – the Bashy Bus HQ's Safe Space for Vulnerable Children and Young.

Additionally, during the period July to October 2012 Agency also partnered with other entities and were able to secure and distribute **428** lubricants and **807** condoms to the project participants

– The End –