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YOUTH VISIONING FINAL REPORT
Submitted by Brain Storm Productions
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PROJECT TITLE: "THE BLOCKO"

LEAD ORGANIZATION: BRAIN STORM PRODUCTIONS

PROJECT LEADER: MS. AMANDA JOHN

PROJECT SUMMARY: Brain Storm Productions (BSP) led the initiative in the development of the 2011 HIV/AIDS community outreach program in Grenada, "**THE BLOCKO.**" The program was the first of its kind on island and was designed primarily to target young males especially those who "*hang out on the block.*"

It brought the issues related to HIV right to the "back-yards" of people in some of the most vulnerable communities in Grenada. Many of these communities are characterized by poverty, unemployment, a high ratio of young adults and children and heavy drug use, just to name a few.

The main objective of "**THE BLOCKO**" was to educate the participants about HIV, which should in turn empower them to make better, healthier choices and foster the ability to nurture the same wisdom in their peers. Using a natural "street-ambiance" we were able to meet with people in their own environment, where they were comfortable enough to talk freely about HIV and its' impact on the their lives.

A team of six highly skilled HIV Peer Educators (trained by the Grenada Red Cross Society) was selected. They, together with two hosts (male & female) engaged in a "refresher" training session.



The activity was organized by Brain Storm Productions and hosted by



Mrs. Samantha Roberts, Member of the Technical Advisory Group for the US PEPFAR (US President Emergency Fund for HIV/AIDS Relief).

A series of activities followed. We have highlighted details of some major activities below.

TIME: JANUARY - MARCH

ACTIVITY: Community Research & Site Visits/Development of Peer Educators Guide

OUTCOME: Targeted communities were identified through recommendation from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Youth and Non-Governmental (NGO) Groups who work at the grass-roots level, such as The Grenada Community Development Agency (Grencoda) and The Grenada Red Cross Society.

Preliminary visits were made to “meet and greet” and to identify willing participants. Visiting the communities ahead of the sessions was necessary, as it provided insight into the specific needs of the people and the HIV related topics that would be best suited for that area. It also gave the communities an opportunity to meet the team and feel comfortable talking to us, which made them more prepared to speak in front of the camera. The production team also used these visits to prepare the location for filming and provide the community leaders with money or ingredients to cook for the day of filming on the block, a crucial part of our strategy to engage more participation.

A “**Peer HIV Educators Guide**” was prepared using documentation developed by the Epidemiology Center in Grenada’s Ministry of Health and the PANCAP Regional Stigma and Discrimination Unit. This was used as a referral manual for the educators to ensure that all sessions delivered the facts about HIV.

TIME: MARCH – JULY

ACTIVITY: Launch/Radio Promotion/Development of The Blocko Facebook page

OUTCOME: The Blocko Project was officially launched in March. Attending the event was The Minister of Health, the Hon. Ann Peters, significant contributors, supporters and the press. The story was later presented as a news item on two television stations, Community Channel Six (CC6) and the Government Information Service (GIS).



As part of our promotions we also appeared on a live television talk show, “Chit Chat” on Community Channel Six (CC6).

Also during this period we designed and executed a weekly, "live ten-minute radio show" on one of Grenada's most popular FM stations, “BOSS FM.” Every Thursday, we shared information about “The Blocko” and “HIV bullet-points” on various aspects including importance of testing, condomizing and clearing up major myths and misconceptions surrounding how HIV is transmitted.



The radio promotion continued well into our scheduled filming days so we then used the air time to inform the public of the next community stop for “The Blocko Caravan” and encouraged them to come out to get the information, as well as to visit “The Blocko Facebook page” where they could get the facts about HIV, interact with the members of The Blocko family and view pictures from the communities we visited.

TIME: MAY – AUGUST

ACTIVITY: Filming/Post Production

OUTCOME: During this period “The Blocko” team comprising of technical crew, HIV Peer educators, experts, doctors and other volunteers from youth organizations such as, The United Students Governing Association (USGA) and SGU Beats, boarded a coaster bus every Sunday to journey to targeted communities to inform about HIV issues including HIV transmission and prevention, myths and misconceptions, stigma and discrimination, gender and human rights issues.



Twelve communities were visited.



NB* The above pictures depict the 12 communities we visited in the order that is presented in the table below

Please see the table below for more details re targeted communities and outcomes:

NAME OF PARISH	NAME OF COMMUNITY	NO.OF PARTICIPANTS
St. Patrick	Hermitage	7
	Mt. Rich	8
St. Mark	River Sallee	11
	Waltham	13
St. John	Black Bay	10
	Gouyave	6
St. George	Willis	6
	Morne Tout	9
St. David	Beaton	7
	Belle Isle	6
St. Andrew	Telescope	13
	Mt. Horne	11
TOTAL		107

We engaged 107 participants during our filmed sessions, way above our target of 72. However, it must be duly noted that in each community, there were dozens of people “off camera” listening during the recorded sessions. The response was so tremendous and the people were so interested, that in each community after the primary session, our HIV educators held additional sessions with people on the street, demonstrating how to use the male and female condoms, showing posters of and explaining other sexually transmitted diseases and distributing male and female condoms, reading material and other paraphernalia.



We quickly realized that reading was limited in many communities, so we reduced the amount of reading material disseminated. Well over twelve thousand (1200) condoms were distributed during this project.

A total of 12 programs were filmed and produced into the reality-TV series called “The Blocko” with each episode approximately 30 minutes long. The format of the program highlights each unique community and discussion with youths on the block. The show features HIV educators, experts and depicts life on the block in all its natural ambiance. This included capturing cultural characteristics of the block such as cooking on an outdoor fire, socializing outside village shops, graffiti etc.

A series of television promos were produced and ran leading up to the premiere broadcast of the show. The program was scheduled for national broadcast on Community Channel Six (CC6) on the cable network for the period August –November 2011. CC6 is currently broadcast to approximately twenty thousand households including the sister islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. The programs will also be distributed on The Blocko's Facebook page and later be made available for regional and international distribution.

LESSONS LEARNT: The Blocko Project was an amazing experience. We could truly see learning take place during our discussions within the various communities we visited. We created a vibrant group now affectionately referred to as "The Blocko Family," comprised of selfless individuals, willing to commit themselves to community outreach and development projects. Having a group that is compatible and each bringing a personal level of knowledge and skill is critical for the success of any team project. Already we have had a number of requests to attend various forums to further help educate about HIV and STI's.

Feedback on the productions has been outstanding and positive, with many asking if there will be another series. We certainly do hope to get funding to continue our HIV campaign message and other related issues, in the future.

While applauding our brilliant efforts, as with any project there were setbacks. Though we were primarily targeting males, we were disappointed that not more females felt free enough to join the young men in talking about the disease. We found that though many young females were present, they did not wish to participate in the discussions and would not permit us to film them, although they listened intently. We need in the future, to consider how we can better engage with those who are shy and reserved.

We also fell short in our hope to deliver all "*fully edited and packaged*" programs by the scheduled date. This was due to some setbacks re filming dates and technical difficulties in the studio used to edit the content. Instead we were only able to deliver 6 full programs and the "*rough cut edits*" of the remaining six, which contain the edited discussions.

Perhaps our final disappointment is that we were not able to complete all our "*return visits*" to the communities to assess the impact of the program by the end of September 2011, due to inclement weather. This activity should be completed by the middle of October. In the future, we can work towards making better contingency plans in case of setbacks, so that we can still meet all targets on time.

We sincerely thank Youth Visioning For Island Living, for giving us the opportunity to successfully produce an amazing HIV/AIDS awareness show, "**The Blocko**," which really has touched the lives of many Grenadians. To date, for the year 2011, the Ministry of Health recorded 18 new cases of HIV in Grenada, **all males** in the productive age range. There's still a lot of work to be done and we look

forward to continue doing our share as we reach out to our young people ***“Making a difference, one community at a time.”***

REPORT SUBMITTED BY:

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