

CARISMA II

Behaviour Change Communication



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In the Caribbean, an estimated 230,000 men, women and children live with HIVⁱ, and AIDS is the leading cause of death among adults aged 15 to 44. Substantial socio-economic disparities compound the HIV epidemic as the highest-risk populations confront significant barriers of access to health information and services. Since CARISMA's inception in 2005, participating social marketing organizations (SMOs) have focussed HIV prevention efforts on vulnerable groups, including Spanish and Creole-speaking migrant populations, disadvantaged youth and sex workers.

Behaviour Change Communication

In response to the prevalence of high-risk sexual behaviour and low-levels of HIV-prevention knowledge, CARISMA partners

have worked together to develop targeted, culturally sensitive behaviour change communication (BCC) campaigns in tandem with community-level outreach.ⁱⁱ Using a wide range of BCC strategies, including soap operas, mobile cinemas, youth theatre, radio and peer counselling, CARISMA has already reached thousands of at-risk individuals with condom-promotion and safe sex messages. A brief outline of the BCC work targeting vulnerable populations is provided below.

Migrants

On the island of Hispaniola, PSI/DR and PSI/Haiti share their respective Spanish-language and Creole-language BCC materials so that each can better communicate with minority-language migrant populations. Through knowledge sharing and cross-country training on best practices – both with Spanish-speaking sex workers in Haiti and Haitian economic migrants in the DR – these

CARISMA partners have built on each other's lessons learnt to devise effective and high-impact peer education, mass media, and one-on-one counselling strategies. PSI/DR's pioneering *Amor de Batey* television mini-series, directly informed by the findings of qualitative formative research, used the medium of a culturally resonant soap opera to deliver safe sex messages to *batey* residents.

Sex Workers

In the Eastern Caribbean, PSI/EC adapted Spanish-language materials created by fellow CARISMA partner PASMO/Belize to strengthen their work with Spanish-speaking sex workers in Antigua/Barbuda, Sint Maarten and Dominica. When programmatic and PEER research revealed high-levels of consistent, yet *incorrect*, levels of condom use among Spanish-speaking sex workers, CARISMA partners intensified their interpersonal

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communications (IPC) and peer education outreach efforts. By the end of phase I, PSI/EC had reached 5,328 Spanish-speaking sex workers with its BCC and IPC initiatives.

Youth

High rates of HIV transmission among Caribbean youth are largely due to a lack of HIV-prevention knowledge, lack of access to youth-appropriate sexual health services and the prevalence of high-risk sexual behaviours. In areas of high poverty and marginalisation, such as the Haitian-dominated *batey* settlements in the Dominican Republic, knowledge of HIV prevention is low. Only 34% of young women and 26% of young men demonstrate sufficient understanding of how to protect themselves against HIV or other sexually transmitted infections – significantly lower levels of knowledge than the general youth population.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition to low-levels of HIV-knowledge, CARISMA partners have found that sexual concurrency (having more than

one sexual partner at the same time) is likely to be a driver of the HIV epidemic in some populations.

In Phase 1, CARISMA's partners reached out to nearly 8300 disadvantaged youth in the Eastern Caribbean and the Dominican Republic with one-on-one and small group peer education outreach. In Haiti, a youth-targeted mass media campaign and the circulation of a youth-focussed quarterly magazine have helped to increase HIV prevention knowledge among this key population. In addition, CARISMA partners have produced BCC campaigns targeting out-of-school youth – a particularly vulnerable sub-population. In the Dominican Republic, the highly popular *Amor de Bateyes* soap opera has proved to be a highly effective method for inserting safe sex messages into youth culture.

BCC in CARISMA II

In Phase II of the CARISMA project, partners will intensify their targeted BCC outreach and

mass media campaigns to better reach these at-risk groups with condom promotion and safe sex messages. For example, PSI Dominican Republic will build on a recent qualitative *bateye* youth study to develop effective mass media campaigns and BCC materials that speak directly to this high-risk group. PSI Caribbean will continue to use peer youth educators at the local level in each of its country programmes in addition to the development of locally produced radio spots and the expansion of its youth-targeting "Got it? Get it" condom campaign. In addition, all participating SMOs will develop anti-stigma and discrimination campaigns.



'Amor de Bateyes' Soap Opera advertisement.

CARISMA II is a regional social marketing programme designed to improve sexual and reproductive health in selected countries of the Caribbean region. The programme aims to increase preventative behaviours among at-risk individuals through social marketing approaches, and improve the availability and affordability of contraceptives in hard to reach areas. CARISMA II is a development programme of CARICOM which is financed by the Federal Republic of Germany through the German Development Bank (KfW). More information about the product is available at www.carisma-pancap.org.

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End Notes

ⁱ UNAIDS, 2008 report on the global AIDS epidemic, accessed 4 August 2009

www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/2008/2008_Global_report.asp

ⁱⁱ BCC "combines commercial marketing techniques to position products and services with messages that promote knowledge and help normalize and reinforce health behaviors...BCC campaigns commonly combine generic and branded communications to promote healthier behaviors while simultaneously encouraging the use of a specific product." See: www.psi.org/our_programs/products/bcc.html

ⁱⁱⁱ Marco International, CESDEM, *Demographic and Health Surveys Dominican Republic 2007*

Contacts

Chris Brady - Team Leader

c.brady@options.co.uk

Joanne Hemmings – Research Manager

j.hemmings@options.co.uk

Kate Gray – Programme Manager

k.gray@options.co.uk