

# CARISMA

## PEER Studies Summary

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## CARISMA II - Caribbean Social Marketing Programme



### Introduction

Between 2005 and 2008, CARISMA, a regional Social Marketing Programme for HIV & AIDS Prevention, was implemented across 13 PANCAP countries and territories (see [www.carisma-pancap.org](http://www.carisma-pancap.org)). This Research Brief summarises results from Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research (PEER) studies conducted during this phase of the programme

### PEER and Social Marketing Organisations in the Caribbean

In-depth understanding of target audiences is essential for developing social marketing strategies that are needs-based and rooted in local contexts. PEER is a qualitative research tool that generates rich narrative data on sensitive issues such as sexual norms and behaviour (see [www.options.co.uk/peer](http://www.options.co.uk/peer)).

Community members are trained to design interview prompts, conduct conversational interviews with their friends, and feed back data to a social scientist. During the first phase of the CARISMA programme, PEER was conducted with female sex workers in Haiti, batey residents in the Dominican

Republic, and young women in Trinidad and Jamaica. The research was conducted for a variety of reasons: as formative research to produce evidence for programme design; to interpret quantitative research findings; to monitor the impact of a behaviour change communication programme; and to design tailored communications, interventions and quantitative tools.

Beneficial aspects of the PEER process which differ from typical qualitative research include:

**SMO staff work directly with peer researchers** to gain a better understanding of issues, through drama, discussion, and visual media. This shifts the balance of power away from programmers and empowers the peer researchers as experts.

It **brings the 'real world' of the target group to life** in an immediate and vivid manner.

Programmers take a **'hands on' approach** to data analysis. They are immersed in the reality of the data, and are forced to think about their strategy from the perspective of the target group.

**A clear and concise synthesis** of the research is produced, which addresses the key issues that programmers need to know about to design their programmes.

SMOs can **readily share results** with creative agencies, marketing departments, and other stakeholders who need to understand the target audience.

PEER findings have widespread appeal as a form of research. The detailed, 'real life' narrative data has captured the attention of a wide audience, including National AIDS Committees, NGOs, and PANCAP.

### Case Study: PEER in Haiti

PEER was conducted among commercial sex workers (CSWs) in Haiti to investigate the context in which condom use decision-making takes place. Key findings include:

- A typology of venues where sex is sold, for example:
  - The Kafé, a 'higher class', safer brothel, providing a more secure income
  - The Mackerel, a large room with small curtained cubicles, where women are less able to enforce consistent condom use, and have poorer pay
  - Street based sex work: women are highly vulnerable and have limited ability to negotiate condom use
- Detailed understanding of the social and economic context in which sex work takes place, and how sex workers live their lives, including routes of entry into sex work (e.g. to support a child without help of child's father/family) and routes of exit from sex work (e.g. looking to men for opportunities to 'leave the life').

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- Better understanding of risk and trust, e.g. the role of current or ex-clients as trusted partners, used for emotional and financial support, pleasure and longer term economic gain. With these partners, sex workers discussed inconsistent condom use and low risk perception, with condoms bringing unwelcome connotations of commerciality to what may be a small circle of trusted partners.
- Understanding the detailed drivers and barriers to condom use, e.g. CSWs may see 15 clients a day and *attempt* consistent condom use, but alcohol and drugs often impair their ability to maintain a 'no condom, no love' strategy.
- The central role of condoms as a risk mitigation strategy, and the many barriers both in terms of negotiating use and securing access, e.g. shortages during carnival time, and an unpleasant smell distracting clients.
- CSWs' prime motivation: finding effective methods to support their children, whilst minimising risk of both infection and stigmatization.

PSI Haiti used the study to identify 'emotional hooks' to use in their programmes. They saw that a successful intervention would

need to seem 'young, clever, street smart, entrepreneurial, ambitious, competent and self-reliant'. Rather than focussing on health-related messages, they focussed Condomania (the name of the intervention) around a promise that, 'the products, skills and knowledge under Condomania will help you take control today, to secure your future, and will be more effective at securing your and your children's future than *going it alone*'. Findings helped PSI Haiti to target outreach activities; develop appropriate messages and materials; and understand the real motivations and constraints faced by sex workers. Shannon Bledsoe, PSI Haiti Country Director, reported that '*PEER really helped us to understand the environment that sex workers are living and working in*'.



### Case Study: PEER in Trinidad

PEER was used in Trinidad to provide evidence for the design of a programme aiming to address issues around transactional sex among young urban women. Key findings include:

- Sexual relationships and financial benefits are intimately linked within *all* relationships, even those defined primarily as romantic. Since concurrent partnerships (individuals having

relationships with more than one partner at the same time) were commonplace among this population, the focus of the study was shifted to understanding how patterns of concurrent relationships are managed and maintained.

- Young women saw money as the main motivator to form and maintain sexual relationships. This was not necessarily due to basic economic survival needs, but rather due to equally important social survival. To do this, women need to maintain their image, the financial costs of which drive a perceived need for concurrent partners.
- The level of control women had in relationships (including ability to use condoms with partners) depended on the type of partner. While young women are often able to insist on condom use with 'outside men' (partners other than the 'personal' man), it is not the norm with 'personal' partners (live-in partner, or partner they spend the most time with).
- Strategies of concurrency require a high degree of skilled management, which should not be under-estimated. The cell-phone is central to juggling schedules with outside men and ensuring that such relationships remain clandestine.
- Women are largely unconcerned about HIV infection, particularly when compared to the two greatest perceived risks, which are being *publicly* 'horned' (cheated on) and getting pregnant. Pregnancy prevention was identified as

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the main motivation for using condoms, when they are used.



- There is little evidence of consistent condom use. When condoms are used, it is usually with outside men and at the beginning of the relationship. Condoms are sometimes reintroduced into relationships with personals when one partner suspects the other of hornin' (cheating). In this regard, condom use is considered a 'demotion' from trusted status, or punishment for hornin' and getting caught.

The young women involved in the study also produced collages from magazine photos illustrating their everyday lives: their tastes, motivations, worries, fashions. Visual outputs and narrative data help to create communications that are meaningful to the target audience. It is important that 'the look', language and vocabulary of communications is authentic. The nuances and accessible detail produced by the study prompted one Trinidadian marketer to remark *'This is really amazing information... if any commercial entity had this profiling information, they could really develop their own campaigns with this... don't hand out this methodology because the commercial guys will be using it!'*

The PEER process did not stop after the workshops had finished. PSI saw PEER as 'opening the

door' to working with this target audience. Since the PEER study, they have had extensive, ongoing engagement with peer researchers: they are currently leading a pilot peer education intervention to look at issues around concurrent partnerships, and they developed their own performance indicators for the intervention.



### Case Study: PEER in Jamaica

PEER has also helped SMOs in designing and interpreting quantitative surveys. In Jamaica, PEER provided a more accurate definition of partner types for the second round of the KAPB survey in 2008. The study found that despite predominant social norms to the contrary, concurrent relationships are an accepted reality in many communities. Different partners were described as fulfilling various emotional, economic and social needs. All these relationships have an important component of exchange:

- **Personal man:** the primary partnership, he may or may not live with the woman.
- For many women, the **baby-father** is also their personal man. Women hope for, but often do not receive, support from him.
- The **'boopsy'** is a man with whom women use the

promise of sex to gain money or gifts for themselves and their family. They avoid actually having sex with him, though might occasionally do so to maintain the relationship.

- A **sugar daddy** is an older man with money. Young women need to maintain good looks and clothes to attract him. They have less control in this relationship: condom use is according to his decision.
- The **man pon the side** is a regular partner outside the primary relationship and may be primarily sexually motivated. The main rationale for condom use with him is to avoid not knowing who has fathered a pregnancy.

### Case Study: PEER in the Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic, PEER results fed into the development of an HIV awareness raising soap opera, *Amor de Bateyes*, which was screened on TV and in community settings. The soap opera took many key themes from the PEER findings:

- The study highlighted the difference between *norms* of behaviour for men and women (stated standards of accepted behaviour) and *actual* behaviour. As everywhere in the world, the standards which people agree on as normal and acceptable in the public sphere differ from actual lived behaviour.
- The picture is complex with *two* competing norms to which men aspire. These are

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expressed in male identities of an *hombre serio* (serious man) and a *chulo* (macho man). The *hombre serio*, a 'respectable' man with few partners who economically supports his family, contrasts with the *chulo*, who is attractive to women and has many partners. Men aspire to be *hombre serio* in the eyes of other men, and *chulo* in relation to women.

- Normative standards of behaviour for women are that they must be seen to be faithful to one partner. A respectable woman is a *mujer de la casa* (woman of the house): a faithful married woman.
- The study explained how these identities relate to lived behaviour. In reality, **having multiple-partners is the most common actual behaviour for both men and women.** It is considered essential by both men and women for a man to have many partners to prove his masculinity. Women reinforce this behaviour, stating that 'no woman would be interested in a man with only one partner.'
- Similarly, it is accepted by men and women that men have more than one family. Multiple families are a social resource for men. A man may have four to five regular partners and any number of additional short-term sexual encounters.
- Women consider it economically essential to have at least two to three partners for financial support. No woman can be economically maintained by

one man in the context of limited sources of income, although these relationships must remain clandestine.

- Crucially, HIV risk is perceived to be related to having many partners who are *non-trusted*. However, trust is not related to fidelity – a trusted partner may have other partners. Trust is related to familiarity, emotion and financial commitment. A non-trusted partner is usually a one-time encounter. A relationship may become trusted after a second or third encounter.
- Modes of transmission of HIV are well understood, and AIDS cases are perceived to be prevalent in the bateyes. Men and women attempt to manage this risk by only having sex with *trusted* partners (perceived as safe), and by using condoms with *non-trusted* partners, a category largely reserved for 'other peoples' relationships.
- Thus condoms are identified with non trusted partnerships, largely with 'women of the street'. Women will insist their partner use condoms with women of the street, but no woman defines herself in those terms. Suggesting condom use implies suspicion on the part of the man and is seen as an insult to the woman.

Health prevention messages which reinforce that condoms are used to protect a person from HIV infection do not reinforce condom use. Rather, the health prevention messages appear to stigmatise men and women who use condoms and ultimately serve to reinforce non-use.



## Using PEER for monitoring

An adapted version of PEER was used two years later in August 2008 with men living in two bateyes. PEER was used among a small section of the target population (men aged 16-25) to see if there were changes in their narratives and perceptions around key behaviours: condom use and multiple sexual partners. The study also helped PSI interpret recent survey results, and provided useful feedback on reactions to behaviour change communications. Key findings include:

- There is a sense of increasing acceptance and availability of condoms. Men talked about various NGOs working in bateyes handing out free condoms regularly. The peer researchers said that things are changing with regard to condoms, that there are more condoms around and they are easier to find. They stressed that condoms are very important for preventing pregnancy, and easier to access than the pill. Parents are also said to be more accepting of condoms: some were said to give their children condoms.
- Condoms are less stigmatised. The association

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between condoms and ill-health appears to be breaking down. Condom use among non-trusted partners is increasingly normalised and said to be more common.

- However, significant barriers to consistent condom use remain, including negative peer pressure, fears over efficacy of condoms (e.g. strength, irritation) and lack of self-efficacy to use consistently.
- There was no evidence for change in norms around multiple sexual partners.
- A new issue to emerge was the use of performance enhancing ointments. The popularity of such substances may have implications for the efficacy of condoms, or even provide opportunities for future condom marketing (e.g. messages that ally themselves to the positive attributes ascribed to these ointments).

*"Men like to use different types of ointments (sofua is the ointment that you put directly on your penis, and anafranin, vengadul, and la pela are pills. And pedra china – meaning Chinese stone, which is a cream). All of these make you last a long time – five or six hours. People are crazy for them around here."* (2008 batey PEER study participant)

These shifts in the social context suggest certain behaviour change areas to re-examine. The following potential areas for action emerged from this study:

- Tackle the belief: 'don't trust a woman's condoms'
- Aim for more consistent and appropriate communications:

- Re-runs of Amor de Bateyes
- Reconsider the utility of Point of Sale posters as they currently have limited impact
- Reinforce advantages of condoms for preventing pregnancy: men are concerned about preventing pregnancy

If PSI are interested in developing interpersonal communications they should consider group discussions that tackle underlying gender norms, assumptions and risk behaviours. The critical and analytical discussions that peer researchers had with each other led to them re-examining assumptions and norms in these areas.

Reinforce consistent condom use: although condom use is increasingly normalised, there is little evidence for improved consistency of condom use, especially once a partner becomes a 'trusted' partner.

## Regional Findings

### Concurrent Partnerships

The PEER studies took place in diverse settings. However, they all provide insights into how concurrency operates in different Caribbean contexts, and show that 'concurrency' should not be seen as 'a behaviour'; there are distinct differences and discrete contexts in which concurrent partnerships operate.

In many contexts, concurrent partnerships are a strategy for social and economic survival. For example, the bateyes are marginalised, former migrant communities, and relationships between men and women were

found to have a strong component of transaction. For women, the strategy of concurrent partners stemmed from the need to provide for their household by using incoming economic resources from different partners. In Haiti, a similar story emerged among sex workers, who ensure that they develop regular and trusted partners to rely on for longer term economic support.

The characteristics of concurrent partnerships in Trinidad and Jamaica were quite different. Although most of these women were relatively poor and from non-affluent areas, they had greater opportunities for education and employment than women in the bateyes or Haiti. Nevertheless, employment was still ad hoc, insecure and poorly paid, and women perceived there to be higher rewards in pursuing relationships with men. Having concurrent partners was driven by aspiration: women wanted to participate in immediate and conspicuous consumption of material items and lifestyle experiences (going out to bars etc). Having sex for material gain is not an end in itself. Ultimately, the desired outcome is social power, which is symbolised through material gain, and which is essential for social survival.

There is no simple relationship between sexual risk taking and poverty. Poverty limits options for social and economic survival, and forces both men and women to adopt risky strategies in often fiercely competitive environments. However, neither men nor women are passive actors; both exploit human sexuality for access to economic resources, social status and

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pleasure. All PEER studies captured women's high degree of agency and ability to strategise, rather than being 'passive victims' of men.

HIV prevention programmes may benefit from an expanded focus beyond condom use and the sexual act itself, in particular, by looking beyond issues of individual self-efficacy or condom negotiation (where men have control) to the broader context of **sexual networking**, where women have significantly more agency.

### Partner Types

Existing labels such as commercial sex, transactional sex and trusted partners require re-examining, as different partner types are rarely as clear-cut as survey questions might imply. For many women, transactional or even commercial partners may not be clearly distinguished from loved or trusted partners. The ubiquity and deeply embedded nature of exchange in relationships means that concurrency rather than transaction became a more important analytical construct over the course of the CARISMA programme. Transactional sex as an analytical category was not useful in examining PEER results as most relationships between men and women were transactional to some degree.

### Trust

Under CARISMA, PEER studies identified a range of social and symbolic barriers to condom use, with remarkable commonalities across the countries. The most important of these was the fact that trusting a partner is symbolically associated with not using condoms, a link which is very difficult to break. While in each PEER study people said that condom use with a new or casual partner is fairly normal, the journey from un-trusted to trusted partner is typically very short. In addition, **although people might aspire to fidelity in relationships, in reality, trust is not about fidelity: it is perceived to be about familiarity, affection, and financial commitment.** Stopping using condoms is a simple way to show trust, and conversely, using a condom makes a powerful statement about 'lack of trust'.

## Programmatic Implications

Analysis of these issues led to the following programmatic recommendations:

- Focus on addressing **concurrency** as a key risk behaviour: while there might not be the potential to

decrease trusted partners, there may be potential to:

- Reduce untrusted partners
- Increase the length of time condoms are used with new partners
- Look for **influential persons** close to home, in the community and strengthen existing values and beliefs. E.g. if 'the look' and effectively managing partners brings status (as in the Trinidad PEER study), build on these concepts.
- Appreciate the strong **behavioural competition for condom use**: non-use is an important symbol of trust, and trust has a central place in relationships.
- Recognise that **negotiation and trust** are key determinants of condom non-use, and are equally as important as other determinants such as price and physical access to condoms.

Rather than trying to change fundamental aspects of social structure, focus on how SMOs can **make condom use 'the right thing to do'** (as opposed to being a stigmatised behaviour associated with HIV).

**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 project is available at [www.carisma-pancap.org](http://www.carisma-pancap.org)

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