



# Body, Mind AND Spirit Creating an Epidemic of Health

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QUARTERLY BMSF NEWSLETTER

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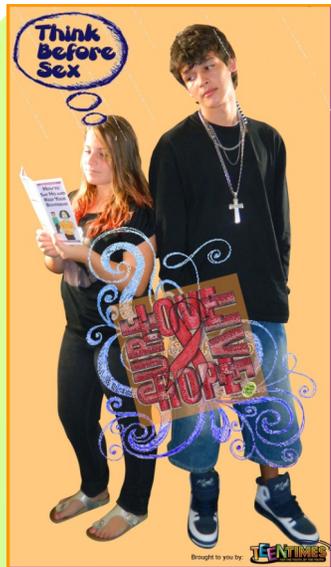
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## RESPECT workshops on addictions and teenage pregnancy

In mid-November, the Body, Mind and Spirit Foundation (BMSF), together with the Saba University School of Medicine (SUSOM), held **Responsible Students Peer Education Curriculum and Training RESPECT** program workshops at the Saba Comprehensive School (SCS) in St. John's. Implemented since 2005 the flagship RESPECT program targets youths' behavioral change with regard to sexual risks whilst promoting protective factors. Medical student volunteers implement the interactive interventions in workshops designed to build life skills and increase knowledge about reproductive health amongst Saba's youths. They promote healthy attitudes and empower teenagers to make informed decisions that can substantially reduce their lifelong risks for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



The workshops in November addressed the relationship between violence and alcohol or drug use, body image and permissive values about premarital sex, early teenage pregnancy prevention, abstinence, condom or contraceptive use and childbearing. Over 50 medical students prepared presentations and interactive games. SCS students were placed in six classes of mixed ages, 13 to 18, while medical students rotated so each participant received all presentations. The medical students presented information on the risks associated with having unprotected sex, of having multiple partners and not using birth control. They highlighted associated risks based on self-image, depression, substance use and peers' norms on sexuality. These topics led to discussions about the life-altering impact of STIs and unplanned pregnancies. →



Using simple words, the students explained the symptoms, testing and treatment of each STI, answering students' concerns about testing confidentiality. The talk about Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and getting timely screenings raised more interest with some uncertainty about actual local implementation of vaccination and screening practices. The youths played STI-related card games to help understand the increased likelihood of the spread of infections and the basis for the promotion of abstinence and monogamous relationships. The presenters developed creative messages about the actual cost of unplanned pregnancies. They stressed that childbearing is not "a way out" for girls who aren't doing well in school or have social difficulties and want an independent social status as single mothers in the community. Instead, the students pointed out the higher financial burdens on single mothers to support the baby whilst being paid little without higher-education diplomas. The youths discussed that whilst abortions are legal in the Netherlands, they are not done on Saba and are illegal on St. Maarten, making it difficult to receive the proper support. They also discussed confidentiality challenges when girls



are sent to Bonaire to have procedures covered by the Dutch insurance. The stigma associated with going there is a deterrent pushing for illegal or secretive abortions done in French St. Martin. The medical students also pointed to serious medical risks associated with labor complications in teenage mothers, and covered all types of birth control options available and their effectiveness, including proper condom use, informing about their availability in Saba. The workshops on violence and respect were connected to discussions on self-esteem, empathy and anger management. Interactive games involved identifying bullying, motivating action from bystanders and nurturing a supportive environment, as well as teaching conflict resolution skills.

The alcohol abuse session covered risks associated with teenage abuse as well as engagement in unprotected sex. It also outlined immediate and long-term medical symptoms, and social consequences. The drug abuse discussions about side effects led to some of the youths' frank accounts about actual use of marijuana, as well as remarks about depression. Many youngsters proved quite aware about lacking harm reduction services and the limited options for dealing with addictions.

## Youth focused community organizations hold Children's Rights Open House

The BMSF in cooperation together with the Youth and Family Centre and the Court of Guardianship office held an open house on November 29<sup>th</sup>. During the public reception ceremony Anastasia Simmons reminded participants about the universal Children's Rights Day observed November 20, and of Saba's delegation to the 20th anniversary celebrations of the Youth Fund of the Netherlands Antilles JENA in Curaçao. BMSF was among the funding organizations working with youth which sponsored the trip of five Saba children and their chaperone to take part in the regional youth festivities.

Acting Island Governor Franklin Wilson addressed the few gathered parents and children, stressing that while the children's rights are not taken lightly, it was a fairly recent struggle to get these internationally recognized and work is still needed in creating awareness and monitoring their protection. He said the local government is championing the rights of the child and marked attempts to combat child abuse and neglect. The manager of BMSF spoke about the various anti-bullying efforts promoted by the organization, which has broad-



Saba's youth delegation to Curaçao wearing BMSF Polo-shirts



ened its mission to encompass not just issues related to the child's healthy development, puberty, reproductive health and teenage pregnancy, but also certain behavior aspect exposing them to health risks. These include anti-addiction campaigns and motivational programs for an active and balanced healthy lifestyle.

Youth and Family Centre's director Ankie Blank mentioned the importance of structural development within the family and gave tips to parents on how to set-up healthy routines and encouraged them to visit the centre.

Simmons stressed that the Court of Guardianship is investigating criminal cases of sexual abuse of minors including suspicion of child trafficking for sexual exploitation. Local authorities are investigating cases in which parents are having "financial gain by permitting a minor to be involved with an adult," in exchange for a certain gain for the parents. Many children from The Bottom participated in the open day event and joined the plentiful buffet. The BMSF set-up anti-bullying cartoons

for the youth to enjoy.

## Breast Cancer Awareness Walk

On October 29th the Saba University School of Medicine together with Saba Lions Club and the Body, Mind and Spirit Foundation organized a breast cancer awareness event. It involved an informative public short-talk held at the Eugenius Johnson Community Center in Windwardside. Dr. Ramona Dumitrescu welcomed everyone and introduced the students, emphasizing the benefit of this type of experience for both the students and Saban community. The lecture included a description of normal and cancerous cells, the statistical data on breast cancer incidence and mortality around the world and in particular in the Caribbean. The main breast cancer risk factors, especially family history of breast cancer and life style risk factors were described. Furthermore, preventive measures were described in details, including demonstrations on breast self-examination methods and evaluation of breast cancer nodules on anatomical models provided by SUSOM.

The solidarity walk started from Windwardside to the campus of the medical university in The Bottom. The KPCN Saba Police kindly escorted the group ensuring safety. On campus the SUSOM Women's Medical Students Association hosted a reception.



## UNICEF workshops on children's rights monitoring

On September 10<sup>th</sup> the BMSF manager together with other Saba professionals working with local youth, took part in the children's rights awareness workshops held by United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF Netherlands representative Karin Kloosterboer. She presented the finding of a UNICEF report titled "Children of the Kingdom, juvenile rights in the Caribbean Netherlands."

The workshops were an initial attempt at creating awareness about the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and to engage the input of local professionals working with youth in a monitoring process with both a short-term and a long-term strategy for improving the situation. The evaluation and discussions with input from all participants led to a more in-depth understanding



standing of the Saba specific challenges with regard to child protection. Exposure to household violence was one of the childrearing bottlenecks highlighted by the discussions combined with

the common absence of positive male role-models in the upbringing of the child. Awareness about the rights of the child and the responsibilities of caregivers still needs to be addressed through an intensive coordinated campaign that explicitly outlines the consequences of neglect, of verbal, physical or sexual abuse of the child. Clear mandates of who is in charge of overseeing what is the main obstacle on Saba, where the human capital and institutional capacity exist.

The participants discussed various attempts of community based organizations in creating (→)

a coordination platform. In addressing child safety concerns most participants voiced support for a long-postponed crisis shelter, an apartment where any child or a battered family member could be hosted pending professional evaluation and conflict resolution. Such a shelter would prevent additional trauma inflicted on the child during the current procedure of transferring the victim to a different island removing it from familiar surroundings and ties. It is expected that such a centre could be accommodated via the social housing community developments on Saba.

The BMSF expressed reservations concerning the qualitative assessment of the UNICEF study and the lack of substantiating data beyond subjective remarks. BMSF suggested the incorporation of issues related to the respect of the child's



identity and a monitoring of diversity aspects in public education. BMSF also suggested that a platform of local community based organization should be trained and tasked to properly monitor actual trends in local child protection and welfare.

Kloosterboer suggested that due to a lack of UNICEF Netherlands resources and the duration it takes to generate such reports the next assessment may occur only in five years.

Actual short to medium term steps in improving outlined challenges rests in the ability of local organizations to work together on this. Local organizations would need to identify or assign representatives specifically tasked to coordinate the monitoring and promotion of children's rights as well as conduct the actual data collection efforts.

### Dutch Caribbean Pink Orange Alliance Annual Conference on LGBTI issues



BMSF board member Bastiaan Janssens and BMSF advisor Carl Buncamper travelled to Bonaire on October 24<sup>th</sup> until the 28<sup>th</sup> for the Dutch Caribbean Pink Orange

Alliance Annual Conference. The meeting funded by the CoC Netherlands and hosted by DIBO for Youth Human Rights Bonaire dealt with the issues surrounding lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) stigma and discrimination in the region. All former Netherlands Antilles islands were represented and gave an overview



of their respective efforts in each territory. The BMSF delegation gave a presentation on Results Based Management administrative approach and its applicability in developing and maintaining partnerships with local and international organizations at various levels. "The participants were really enthusiastic and

sought our further assistance in helping them implement this administrative approach for their individual territory," said Janssens. BMSF was awarded

several distinctions from the hosting organization DIBO Human Rights Bonaire. Among them BMSF received the bronze medal as the Humanitarian Group Award for our contributions and efforts in promoting LGBTI issues in the Caribbean. Buncamper received the Gold Humanitarian Activist Award in promoting human rights efforts within the Caribbean Netherlands.

On November 7<sup>th</sup> the group celebrated the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Pink Orange Accord that established the alliance as the main human rights lobby entity for the Dutch Caribbean.



## World AIDS Day 2013

Marking World AIDS Day Health Commissioner Bruce Zagers publicly called on the community to wear the Red Ribbon as a symbol of solidarity in the global campaign to halt and mitigate the impact of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). In his public address he noted that World AIDS Day is also an occasion to reflect on the island's achievements in halting the spread of HIV. "Under the leadership of the Island Government, the Public Health Department and the steadfast efforts of the Body, Mind and Spirit Foundation (BMSF), the island has developed a sustainable course of action in combating HIV for the 2013-2017 period. Commissioner Zagers noted that the BMSF has also drafted guidelines to ensure that health status based discrimination is combated within the workplace environment.

Commissioner Zagers also commended our year-round youth HIV prevention programmes "Girl Power," "Real Men" and the "RESPECT" workshops implemented by BMSF and the Saba University School of Medicine (SUSOM) within the Saba Comprehensive School (SCS). These programmes have organically grown in recent years to creatively cover all family planning and balanced lifestyle issues, while at the same maintaining the focus on raising awareness about all Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). In light of a more complex understanding of the co-factors that put certain people at risk of acquiring STIs, the BMSF has broadened its reach to incorporate awareness campaigns about addictions, bullying, family violence and human rights, but also on living with chronic diseases influenced by lifestyle

factors. This drive seeks to incorporate HIV combating efforts within the broader framework of Public Health services. "As the Island Government seeks to consolidate the Public Health department, we looked pragmatically at the short and medium-term cost benefit of maintaining the programmes implemented by the BMSF. It is on this basis that we allocated an incremental growth in the subsidy budget to allow these programmes to remain sustainable. The Health Commissioner said that "the island government remains committed to ensuring treatment; counseling and care services are maintained for people living with HIV." He added "We appreciate the efforts



spearheaded by the BMSF through collaborations with international donor agencies, private sector and local stakeholders, faith-based and non-governmental organizations." Commissioner Zagers pledged the island will remain steadfast in its goal of raising an HIV-free generation. He echoed the international call of "getting to zero: zero new infections, zero discrimination, zero AIDS-related deaths." He also agrees with the BMSF's focus on continuing to improve access to prevention, treatment and care services especially for adolescents age 10 to 18 as this continues to be a vulnerable group as identified by the World Health Organization. The commissioner called on Saba residents to "get informed and go get tested."



## Community-wide solidarity showcased on World AIDS Day

Highlighting World AIDS Day, several community-based organizations rallied up in an effort to show Saba's continued solidarity in the fight against HIV and AIDS. In preparation of the day, BMSF developed and unveiled a three-hour informational World AIDS Day-themed video montage featured on the local television station Channel 15. The video materials also featured Human Rights challenges within the region marking December 10th as International Human Rights Day. The joint television loop sought to show the interconnected nature of human rights and public health issues. BMSF also distributed Red Ribbons, information material, condoms and lubricants throughout the community during this awareness raising campaign. We also provided red ribbons to faith-based community leaders of all denominations for distribution during this weekend's services.

Students at Saba Comprehensive School (SCS) also pledged to get informed, research the history of World AIDS Day and hold a school-wide morning-gathering presentation on AIDS awareness on the school compound in St. John's. BMSF provided the SCS student counselor with a variety of informational materials that the youth can confidentially access while also receiving guidance on local resources.

The Public Health Department and Saba Health Care Foundation (SHCF) also took steps to highlight World AIDS Day at A.M. Edwards Medical Centre in The Bottom. BMSF provided a large red-ribbon banner,

which was displayed at the hospital, as well as banners calling on residents to use free, rapid HIV testing, confidentially available at the downstairs laboratory. The medical staff pledged to show their solidarity and care by wearing the ribbons for the entire month.

Saba University School of Medicine (SUSOM) student volunteers distributed ribbons among the student body and to faculty the week prior. Student Lisa Smith offered her time and resources to create hundreds of ribbons that her fellow students later distributed, fundraising for educational materials targeting HIV/AIDS prevention on Saba.

Many of the participants at the Medical student Holiday Concert wore the Red Ribbons on sale at the entrance. Saba University School of Medicine's "Synoptic Clefts" Choir held a well received Holiday Concert outdoors at Topogigio establishment in The Bottom. In the same spirit of solidarity several medical students organized an impromptu fundraising for the victims of the typhoon in The Philippines. Medical students cooked and sold lasagna to their colleagues raising \$670 which they gave to Fr. Danilo Pastor to be sent to his native country. The Catholic Diocese used its counterparts in The Philippines to deliver the funds to those in desperate need. Not forgetting the youth and the elderly during the winter holiday season, the medical students also organized a Saba Palooza fundraising outdoors sports day in which local youth teams participated. The proceeds were donated to the Old Age Home.



One Little Thing...



Changes Everything



CREATING AN EPIDEMIC OF HEALTH

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To sign up for our newsletters send an e-mail with subject "newsletter" to one of our e-mail addresses below:  
infoasgsaba@yahoo.com  
or info@aidssupportgroupsaba.org

**BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT** is a community-based organization tasked to create public health awareness campaigns. It was established in 1990 as The AIDS Support Group Saba (ASGS) Foundation to address the specific challenge posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). While the organization has broadened its scope it is still the prime agency charged with the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control. Through our ongoing efforts the organization seeks to further the well-being of the community by mobilizing resources to prevent diseases and promote a healthy balanced lifestyle.

**VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME!** We welcome your contribution and invite you to join, helping us empower our community to live a healthy lifestyle in an environment free of stigma. Volunteers in our programs have a real impact especially in the lives of our youth, helping raise a tolerant and well-informed HIV/AIDS-free generation.

**ACT RESPONSIBLY!** Get informed, be aware you can't tell if someone's got a sexually transmitted infection.

**PROTECT YOURSELF!** Free condoms are available at our office.

**KNOW YOUR STATUS! GET TESTED!** Find out NOW! Ask for a rapid HIV test. Get your results today!

**MAKE A DONATION!** We rely on outside sources to continue our awareness programs. No amount we receive is too little. We greatly appreciate your kindness.

**JOIN US!** Our meetings are open and membership is free!

Protect yourself & your family from **Dengue Fever!**

You can get Dengue Fever from a mosquito bite!  
Here are some tips to avoid mosquito bites:

- 1) Remove any outside containers that have water in them. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Their favourite places are tires and water pots! If these things don't exist, neither will mosquitoes!
- 2) Wear mosquito repellent when you are outside, especially for long periods of time. This is the best way to make sure you don't get a bite.



- 3) Close your doors! Mosquitoes like to come inside your house and bite you!
- 4) Check your window screens for holes. Mosquitoes will squeeze through these tiny holes! If you find holes: repair them, or replace the screen.

If you get a fever or a rash, go to the hospital and see a doctor.

If you think you have Dengue Fever:

Stay hydrated: drink lots of water.

Go to the hospital: they may have to put you on an I.V. and hydrate you.  
Stay inside: It is easy for a mosquito to transmit Dengue to someone else.

Let's stop the cycle of Dengue on Saba!

This October **SUSOM** Global Health Club medical students developed and delivered bilingual Dengue prevention posters. These were printed with the financial support of Saba Lions Club and BMSF.

Protégete a ti y a tu familia de la Fiebre del **Dengue!!!**

Puedes coger Dengue por una picada de mosquito!  
Aquí puedes obtener algunos consejos como evitar las picadas:

- 1) Deshágase de cualquier recipiente que tenga agua estancada. Los mosquitos ponen sus huevos en esas aguas. Los lugares favoritos son las gomas y los recipientes con agua. Si estas cosas no existieran, tampoco los mosquitos, ni el Dengue!
- 2) Aplíquese repelentes cuando salga afuera, especialmente si es por mucho tiempo. Esta es la mejor manera de cerciorarse no ser picado por los mosquitos.



- 3) Cierre sus puertas! A los mosquitos les gusta entrar a su casa y picarlo(a)!
- 4) Es importante chequear las mallas de sus ventanas. Los mosquitos pueden entrar por huecos o aberturas pequeñas! Si tiene alguna abertura en las mallas, arréguelas, o cambie las mallas.

Como puedo saber si tengo la Fiebre del Dengue?  
Si tiene fiebre o alguna picadura en su piel, acuda al hospital a ver al doctor.

Que puedo hacer si pienso que tengo la Fiebre del Dengue?

Manténgase hidratado(a): Tome mucho agua.

Acuda al hospital: Puede necesitar ser hidratado.

Manténgase adentro: Es fácil para los mosquitos transmitir el Dengue a otra personas.

Para el ciclo de Dengue en Saba!

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