PMC-ETHIOPIA CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

With 740 episodes produced and aired to date, several radio magazine programs and talk shows, more than ten publications, and numerous workshops, PMC-Ethiopia celebrates its tenth year as the leading organization for entertainment-education for social change in Ethiopia.

Just one year after starting PMC, Bill Ryerson, President, visited Ethiopia and met Dr. Negussie Teferra. At the time, Dr. Negussie was working as head of the National Office of Population for the Government of Ethiopia; previously he worked as a radio producer – a perfect fit for PMC’s work. Soon after this visit, Dr. Negussie joined PMC as the Country Representative for Ethiopia, and now ten years later, Dr. Negussie has carried out six highly impactful programs in the country.

Ryerson is thrilled that PMC-Ethiopia is reaching this milestone, “Dr. Negussie has served as an inspiring leader for the staff and creative personnel connected with our work. It is his special approach, combined with the very significant impact of PMC’s six projects in Ethiopia, that has led to continued commitment by donors and the government of Ethiopia in support of our work.”

PMC-Ethiopia utilizes the Whole Society Strategy, an approach developed by PMC that seeks to reach people through a range of media channels and formats to reinforce the messages and
Electronic Game to Prevent Violence Against Women

Over the course of the past year, PMC has embarked on a new and fascinating journey with the Emergent Media Center (EMC) at Champlain College to create an electronic game that will prevent violence against women.

Electronic games are becoming an increasingly popular medium, especially among adolescent boys. Today, many boys and young men spend more time playing video games than they do watching television shows. However, numerous games on the market today actually promote violent behaviors and even misogynistic values, as was so clearly highlighted in the very popular Grand Theft Auto which encouraged players to climb the criminal ladder by committing violent acts including killing policemen, drinking and driving, and even soliciting and in one occasion raping prostitutes. Not surprisingly, numerous studies are being conducted that point to the negative impact of such games.

While some games today may promote the exact behaviors PMC is trying to change around the world, the power and popularity of gaming cannot be ignored. Electronic games are a unique vehicle for reaching boys and young men. Games have the potential to have a very positive impact on gender issues by profoundly shifting beliefs, stereotypes, and attitudes. Unlike other types of media where the audience is simply watching or observing, games are participatory and therefore require the gamer to make critical decisions in order to improve their chances of winning the game. Through this process, there are numerous opportunities to demonstrate and highlight the importance of making positive decisions, ones that can even be replicated in the real world - such as treating women and girls with respect.

What sets our approach apart from the other games for change is the framework that PMC and the Emergent Media Center designed to help inform the development of the game. The game utilizes three complementary methods: the UNFPA toolkit of culturally sensitive approaches to create change, the Sabido methodology of entertainment-education, and the FIFA (Fédération Intéernationale de Football Association) “Fair Play” rules.

About the Game: Breakaway

Breakaway (working title) combines fast-paced soccer (football) gameplay with a narrative designed to encourage positive attitudes and behaviors in combating violence against women. To win the game and be a champion, players must refine their skills both on and off the field.

Violence against women is largely addressed through two female characters: the Player’s younger sister and a new girl in town. The position of the Player’s sister in the narrative is representative of the position of women in the world generally—subject, through no fault of their own, to male exercises of power and victimization. The other main female character presents some serious challenges for the Player, but you will have to stay tuned to find out exactly how. The game is expected to launch during the World Cup this June, and while the marketing team will be giving out small bits of information about the game leading up to the release, the only way to find out how the story evolves and how to win is to play when the game comes out.
Pretesting the Game
In December 2009, the game development team visited Saint Lucia to test the game. The primary goals were to test for game enjoyment, identify points of confusion or boredom, find out how participants understood the rewards system, get responses to the art work, and to learn how participants accessed technology.

Tests included:
- A complete digital version of Episode 1
- Digital versions of the soccer training games (Passing, Shooting, Handling, and Defending mini-games)
- 3D renders of character and environmental art
- A simulation of the game’s reward system
- A marketing survey

A total of 54 students (52 boys, 2 girls) between the ages of 9 and 16 participated in the pretest. All the participants were soccer players. The response to the game was overwhelmingly positive. Out of a total of 39 participants, 22 gave the game a rank of 5, the highest possible rating. After going through the test version of Episode 1, the majority of the respondents said they would like to continue playing the game.

The information gleaned from the testing has helped to guide adjustments to the next iteration of Breakaway. While participants enjoyed the game, with further probing it became clear that some of the interface elements need improvement so that a Player has a clearer indication of when he succeeds or fails during gameplay. In gaming it is important to get the level of difficulty just right. If the game is too hard or too easy to play, gamers will lose interest. Testing revealed that the Passing game was too easy and the Handling game was too difficult. As a result, the design team will be adjusting the mechanics of each game to reflect player feedback. Participants especially liked the Shooting game. Getting a goal electronically seems to have the same appeal and thrill as it does in the real world of soccer.

The first three episodes of the game will be launched online during the 2010 World Cup this June. The remaining 11 episodes will be launched sequentially throughout the year following the World Cup.

This project is made possible by the support of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and several individual contributors.
role modeling provided in the radio serial dramas. Ryerson states, “PMC-Ethiopia has been a role model for all PMC programs around the world, both in the continuity of effort over many years and in the comprehensive approach taken in our work there.”

Ethiopia is the second most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa, with 84.5 million people. It is also one of the poorest developing nations. The country has had to deal with droughts and famines. Over the past ten years, PMC-Ethiopia has implemented a variety of projects focusing on some of the most important issues facing Ethiopia, such as: family planning, HIV/AIDs, reproductive health, women’s empowerment, and gender based violence, with special emphasis on harmful traditional practices including Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C). These programs simultaneously addressed the issues through radio dramas, traveling stage plays, capacity building workshops, print materials, and talk shows for social change.

Central to PMC-Ethiopia’s work is the production of Sabido-style radio serial dramas. They have produced five primetime serial dramas of more than 100 episodes each. The overwhelming popularity of these programs throughout the country is one of the main reasons for PMC’s great success. Dr. Negussie reports, “We have received more than 27,000 listener letters and 7,000 diaries from listeners indicating that the content of the programs influenced them to change their behaviors.”

Dr. Negussie explains some of the changes they have witnessed as a result of PMC programs, “Quite a substantial number of men and women have started to use family planning.” He said a significant proportion of young people “have refrained from sex until marriage or are using condoms, or have only one partner.” Dr. Negussie gives credit to his team of writers and actors, who have shown commitment, love for their country, and passion for their work. Most of the writers and actors have been with PMC since the first program went on the air in Ethiopia.

The serial dramas have had a tremendous impact on the behaviors and attitudes of listeners. During the first program, health care workers conducted about 14,400 exit interviews at clinics and hospitals and found that 63% of their clients were listening to a PMC program and 26% of clients cited one of PMC’s programs as the reason for coming to the clinic. The research carried out before and after the programs went on the air has also pointed to significant behavior change that can be attributed to the serial dramas.

Part of PMC’s strategy has been to implement training workshops on the issues being addressed in the programs. For example, PMC held training workshops on the issue of FGM for community and religious leaders in various regions of the country, with a strong focus on the Somali and Afar regions. These workshops resulted in significant policy changes with regard to the practice of FGM/C. Religious leaders are a very important group to involve when trying to create social change, as they are powerful members of society and are very influential in the communities. The training workshops for religious leaders have been a very valuable component in creating sustainable change in these communities. At the conclusion of the workshop in the Afar region, religious leaders made commitments to stop circumcising their own children in order to become role models for the community.

It is impossible to adequately capture the breadth of PMC-Ethiopia’s programs and the impact they have had on the country in this short article. Their impressive work has contributed to an increase of use of family planning, a reduction in harmful traditional practices such as FGM/C, improvement in the status of women, and overall improved quality of life in Ethiopia.

PMC is overjoyed to be celebrating ten years in Ethiopia, and would like to express our deepest gratitude to Dr. Negussie and the entire PMC-Ethiopia team. The talents and dedication of the team are remarkable. Their work has had a substantial impact in the country and is helping to achieve PMC’s mission worldwide.
Check Out PMC’s New TV Spot on Population

When was the last time you saw a TV ad about unsustainable population growth -- and what you could do to help? PMC is excited to announce the release of our first ever public service announcement aimed at an American audience on the issue of population.

The PSA, titled “Elevator,” was created to highlight how many of the most pressing issues we face today, as a planet and in the United States, are compounded by rapidly growing population. Seventy-two more people will be added to the planet in the short 30 seconds it will take you to watch this PSA.

PMC used a competitive production process to develop this public service announcement. A total of 20 concepts were submitted for consideration; and with the expert help of TV industry professionals like MTV’s Vice President for Social Responsibility, John Jackson (who is also on PMC’s Program Advisory Board) and Emmy Award winner and PMC Board Member, Virginia Carter, who during her Hollywood career, worked on shows such as All in the Family and The Jeffersons, we selected the top three concepts to go into production. Combining this expert feedback with PMC’s extensive experience in entertainment-education, we worked closely with the production teams throughout the storyboarding, scripting, and editing process. We then tested the three rough cuts with a small convenience sample to find out which spot was rated the highest. In the end, “Elevator” was rated the strongest by our focus groups – and we agree!

The PSA is featured on the homepage of our website, www.populationmedia.org, and is also our our YouTube Channel, www.youtube.com/user/PopulationMediaCtr. Help us get the message out about the critical need to stabilize population numbers by forwarding the link to this PSA to your family and friends, and/or repost it to your blog, webpage, or favorite social network.

“Elevator” was produced by Tirior A Films with generous support from the Colcom Foundation.

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PMC Welcomes Betty Oala, Papua New Guinea Project Director

Betty Oala is Population Media Center’s Project Director in Papua New Guinea. Before joining PMC, Betty served as Program Associate for SeaWeb’s Asia Pacific Program. Betty was head of SeaWeb’s Papua New Guinea office and worked closely with local and international media to promote media coverage of marine issues. Prior to her work at SeaWeb, Betty was a broadcast journalist, writing for state radio programs for eight years, and a communications specialist for the Investment Promotion Agency of Papua New Guinea for 10 years. Betty has a diploma in media studies from the University of Papua New Guinea and a diploma in economic policy analysis from the National Research Institute of Papua New Guinea.

PMC President Bill Ryerson and PMC-PNG Project Director Betty Oala in our new office in Port Moresby.
Population Media Center (PMC) works worldwide using entertainment-education for social change. PMC’s programs encourage positive behavior change among the audience.

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Cover Photo by Joe Penney, USAID/Senegal
Edited and Designed by Katie Elmore
Contributing Writers: Joe Bish, Thato Ratsebe, and Wendi Stein

CREATING ROLE MODELS IN THE MEDIA TO DEVELOP THE ROLE MODELS OF THE NEXT GENERATION