



## German contributions to the Caribbean AIDS response

### The Context

The Caribbean is a region of extraordinary diversity but it has a regional pattern of risk factors for HIV:

- Sex before marriage, early sexual initiation, multiple sexual partners, and ignorance about how to prevent pregnancy and infection are common.
- The epidemic emerged among men who have sex with men and many still believe that AIDS is “a gay disease.” Extreme prejudice against gay men continues to block effective prevention.
- Sex work and transactional sex, related in part to the booming tourism industry, make significant contributions to the epidemic’s spread.
- The macho attitudes of men lead to sexual exploitation and abuse of women, adolescents and children, putting them at high risk of HIV infection.

This publication looks at German-supported AIDS programmes in the Caribbean region. The first section describes initiatives supported by the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) beginning in 1995 and aimed at HIV prevention among youth. The second describes an initiative funded by the German Development Bank (KfW) beginning in 2005 and taking a regional approach to social marketing of condoms and behaviour change communications.

### Empowering youth to shape national AIDS responses

From late 1995 to early 2006, GTZ supported a number of initiatives to empower Caribbean youth to shape policies and programmes aimed at preventing HIV among youth. At first, GTZ’s support came through the CAREC-GTZ youth initiative, a collaboration with the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC), and it was confined to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), home to 38% of the region’s population. From 2003 onwards, GTZ’s support was provided through the Proyecto Supra-Regional “Juventud y Sida en el Caribe” (ProSuRe-GTZ) and touched on

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countries in the entire Caribbean region, as defined by membership in the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP). Both projects strengthened the three pillars of effective youth participation in national and regional AIDS responses:

- local youth-run services
- national and regional youth networks
- youth involvement in policy and programme development.

### German HIV Practice Collection

Publications in this Collection describe programmes supported by German Development Cooperation that have been assessed as “promising or good practice” by an editorial board of experts from German development organizations and by two international peer reviewers with renowned expertise in the particular field.

Each publication tells the story – in plain language – of how a particular approach has been implemented in one or more countries, making it accessible to more than just experts in the field. Each one is published in a short (four-page) and full version, often with links to related tools and reading at [www.german-practice-collection.org](http://www.german-practice-collection.org).

The Collection aims to stimulate dialogue, so please visit this website and tell us what you think.

Managing Editor ([ghpc@giz.de](mailto:ghpc@giz.de))

Peer-reviewed

## Local youth-run services

The ultimate aim of AIDS policies and programmes is to deliver services to the neighbourhoods and communities where the people most in need of them live and work. Local services should be established as soon as possible and then adjusted and improved based on growing evidence from serological and behavioural surveillance, special studies and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

### Rap Port Youth Information and Outreach Centres

Trinidad and Tobago's Rap Port centres grew out of focus group discussions with youth initiated by the National AIDS Programme. The first opened in Port of Spain in 1995 and two additional centres opened in the north-west and southeast in 2002-03. The initial focus was on using music, dance and drama to convey information about sexuality and sexual health and to counter stigma and discrimination. These activities created demand for more services including centre-based and outreach programmes. Staff members and volunteers are from 19 to 30, selected for their demonstrated interest in HIV prevention among youth (often because they are HIV-positive) and trained in communication, counselling and peer education.

### Toco Youth and Sexuality Project

In St. David County in Trinidad's impoverished north-east, youth suffer greatly from high unemployment and low income. In 1998, five young activists proposed a Youth and Sexuality Project to the locally based Toco Foundation, and asked CAREC-GTZ for financial and technical support. The Project began with a survey covering in-school and out-of-school youth. The results opened local eyes to the reality of young people's sexual behaviour and won support for a range of in-school and out-of-school programmes delivered by young staff and volunteers.

### Ideas Youth Café

The Ideas Youth Café arose in 2004 from informal discussions among youth in the Dominican Republic's capital, Santo Domingo. With support from ProSuRe-GTZ, a youth committee developed the concept for the café as a centre for youth culture and youth reproductive health, encouraging marginalized groups to define their



special needs and to help shape services meeting those needs. In December 2005, a three-month trial run demonstrated that, with adequate support, the Café has the potential to serve the same functions as the Rap Port centres and the Toco Youth and Sexuality Project.

### Puna y Letra

In the Dominican Republic, the group Puna y Letra uses reggaetón (with elements of reggae, bomba, pena, hip-hop, and rap) to address poverty, hunger, racism, macho behaviour and HIV, and show how young people can overcome those challenges. With support from ProSuRe-GTZ, Puna y Letra has performed in poor urban barrios, towns and villages and reached thousands of young people across the country.

## Building national and regional youth networks

### Trinidad Youth Council

With support from CAREC-GTZ, the Trinidad Youth Council worked with the Rap Port centres and the Toco Youth and Sexuality Project to establish its own youth and AIDS programme. Now many groups belonging to the Council have their own peer educators doing many of the same things Rap Port and Toco do but in different parts of Trinidad.

### The Tertulia

In the Dominican Republic in late 2004, ProSuRe-GTZ supported the launch of the Tertulia, a series of informal gatherings where organizations representing or serving youth came together to exchange information on AIDS among youth and how to prevent it. Attending were people living with HIV, gay men, male and female sex workers, members of gangs from the barrios, medical students, religious leaders, and representatives of government and UN agencies. The Ideas Youth Café was one of many initiatives that arose from the Tertulia.

### Caribbean HIV/AIDS Youth Network (CHAYN)

Delegates from 13 Caribbean countries met in Santo Domingo in April 2002 and established the Caribbean HIV/AIDS Youth Network (CHAYN). In 2003, ProSuRE-GTZ began supporting the initiative. By the end of 2005, CHAYN seemed to be well on track toward becoming the principal mechanism for national and regional youth organizations and networks to collaborate on the response to AIDS among Caribbean youth. With continued support, CHAYN is in a good position to make further progress toward that goal.

### Involving youth in policy and programme development

In 2004-05, ProSuRE-GTZ supported the participation of more than 50 representatives from six youth networks in the revision of CARICOM's Regional Strategy for Youth Development. ProSuRE-GTZ also supported the work of the Trinidad and Tobago Youth Councils with the National AIDS Coordinating Committee and the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs to ensure that appropriate youth strategies were included in the National Strategic Plan 2004-08.

### Results and peer review

Even the most successful of the youth initiatives supported by CAREC-GTZ and Prosure GTZ require improved targeting (based on serological and behavioural surveillance) and monitoring and evaluation. However, they provide solid foundations for a vigorous response to AIDS among the youth who are most at risk, including action to address the factors that put them at risk.

In **Trinidad and Tobago**, strong partnerships among key players (including recognized national and regional authorities) made it possible, in a sustained, step-by-step manner, to build a network of local youth-run services across the country.

In the **Dominican Republic**, ProSuRE-GTZ demonstrated the potential to build a similar network of youth-run services. With new infusions of technical and financial support, it will be possible to pick up where ProSure-GTZ left off.

During the three years of support by ProSuRE-GTZ, the Caribbean HIV/AIDS Youth Network (CHAYN) made progress towards becoming the principal mechanism for national and regional youth organizations and networks to collaborate on AIDS responses among Caribbean youth. With new infusions of support, CHAYN could well achieve its goal.

The board of the German HIV Practice Collection, in their review of the approaches aimed at empowering youth to shape AIDS responses, found that all of them qualify as innovative, participatory, empowering, and gender-responsive. Those in Trinidad and Tobago are also cost-effective, sustainable, transferable, and well-documented. It remains to be seen whether those in the Dominican Republic and CHAYN will meet those criteria in the future.

### Caribbean Social Marketing to Prevent HIV and AIDS (CARISMA): A regional approach

In 2005, KfW Development Bank embarked on an innovative regional HIV prevention initiative which provides behaviour change communications (BCC) and social marketing of high-quality condoms. PANCAP has overall implementation responsibility, working under the leadership of CARICOM. To date, the programme has been implemented in Belize, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica.

Five population groups were targetted with different activities and health products: sex workers and their clients; men who have sex with men; Garifuna populations (descendants of Amerindian and African people); migrants; travel industry workers.

The implementation phase began in March 2005 in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, while activities in Belize and Jamaica followed at the beginning of 2007. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provided co-financing for the regional consultant.

In **Belize**, social marketing of condoms and BCC have been implemented with a number of NGOs, the public sector, and private sector distributors and retailers. Expected results include increased demand for condoms

and water-based lubricants, the creation of a distribution network, and increased HIV-related knowledge and protective behaviours among the five targetted population groups.

In the **Dominican Republic**, three programmes have been undertaken to increase safer sexual practices among sex workers, youth, and the residents of bateyes (communities at old sugar plantations, now home to poor families descended from Haitian migrant workers). The Youth Programme targets teenagers and young adults with a website [www.sejevi.org](http://www.sejevi.org) and TV and radio spots done in cooperation with UNICEF, capacity building in social marketing and BCC, and condom promotion. The Batey Programme includes condom distribution, training of local NGOs in social marketing, and a televised soap opera called “Amor de Batey.” The Sex Worker Programme focuses on social marketing of condoms and lubricants to both male and female sex workers.

In **Haiti**, KfW’s financial support complements funding from the US government and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. Based on the research, a multi-donor HIV prevention programme was designed to reach sex workers and youth through mass media, interpersonal communications and enhanced distribution of condoms. In addition, activities for children and youth – both in and out of school -- were carried out by FOSREF, an NGO well-known in Haiti for its work with young people.

In **Jamaica**, CARISMA aims to significantly expand the overall condom market through marketing and communications. Activities focus on mass media interventions targetting both men and women, and promote the consistent use of condoms with every partner, including “trusted” ones.

The experience of CARISMA to date suggests that regional approaches can have significant beneficial effects, although these have so far not been formally reviewed and evaluated. Observed and hoped-for benefits include: harmonisation of policies and administration; enhanced sustainability; deepening regional integration; and increasing programme efficiency. It is also hoped that regional programmes to prevent HIV will have greater impact because they can cross borders and reach target groups that would otherwise be excluded from HIV prevention efforts.

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## Contacts and credits

Published by:  
The German HIV Practice Collection (GHPC)  
GHPC Secretariat run by the Project  
‘Strengthening the German contribution  
to the global AIDS response’  
Responsible: Dr. Thomas Kirsch-Woik  
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH  
Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5  
65760 Eschborn / Germany  
E [ghpc@giz.de](mailto:ghpc@giz.de)  
I [www.german-practice-collection.org](http://www.german-practice-collection.org)

Contact at KfW Entwicklungsbank  
Katharina Anschütz  
Sector Economist Health  
E [katharina.anschuetz@kfw.de](mailto:katharina.anschuetz@kfw.de)

Contact Person in the Federal Ministry for  
Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)  
Dr. Simon Koppers, Section 311  
E [simon.koppers@bmz.bund.de](mailto:simon.koppers@bmz.bund.de)

Writer: Stuart Adams  
Photographs: The ProSuRe team

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