

Using Cultural Approaches for Solid Waste Management Education

By

**Valerie Beach-Horne & Joan Ryan
Central Water & Sewerage Authority
St.Vincent & the Grenadines**

INTRODUCTION

- **The Solid Waste Management Unit was formally established within the Central Water & Sewerage Authority St.Vincent, in November of 1999 as part of the OECS Solid and Ship Generated Waste Management Project. At that time the waste collection system in the country, was being managed by the Public Health Department in the Ministry of Health and the Environment, and served less than half of the population.**

INTRO.CON'T

- In January 2001, the Solid Waste Management Unit assumed responsibility of this system and all of the inherent problems, A programme of education and awareness was implemented and Infrastructure put in place for the sanitary collection and disposal of solid waste. Given the magnitude of attitude change required, it was realised that educational approaches had to be innovative, imaginative, relevant and effective. These included use of the electronic and print media, development of educational/promotional material, establishing partnerships with the private and public sector as well as NGOs, and community outreach.

A National Collection System

In November of 2001, the Unit was mandated to extend the collection system nationally, by December 15th. This required mass education in order for the message to reach all the areas that would have been affected. It was imperative that an imaginative approach be used (driving around the communities using a public address system to sensitise people) allowing for the involvement of the entire team. The results: all of the targeted areas were informed, and the system was satisfactorily implemented within the prescribed time frame.

once the basic waste management system had been put in place, it required and still requires, on going education and innovative initiatives to foster and sustain interest in the educational process.

Educational Approaches

The field worker is constantly challenged to think of new ways to reach the target audience, and encourage their active participation, hence the experimenting with different and unusual media of teaching/learning. Over the years our societies have used traditional approaches to education as is seen in the system of learning by rote still used in our schools. The use of cultural approaches encourages active participation and stimulate creative thinking, which assists participants to retain the information learned.

Educational Approaches cont'd

Motorcades and Whistle Stops are part of our political culture and have seen active participation of the audience. Tea Meeting and Wakes have been around since the days of slavery and were used as tools to educate, entertain and support. This paper will focus on these three initiatives: the Cultural Wake, the Motorcade and Whistle Stops and the Tea Meeting.

Objectives & Methodology

Objectives

- **To encourage participation from all sectors of the society in the development of educational programmes.**
- **To ensure that all sectors of the society are informed of, and benefit from developments in solid waste management.**

Methodology

- **Revival of dying cultural activities e.g. Tea-Meetings that successfully saw the participation from target audience**
- **Use of approaches normally associated with political mobilisation, e.g. Whistle Stops and Motorcades**
- **Cultural Wakes, which allows for involvement from other relevant sectors as well as residents of the targeted communities**

THE CULTURAL WAKE

As the name of implies, the medium is local culture. Wakes were traditionally held at the homes of persons who had just died. People attending the wake shared memories of the individual, talked Annancy stories and usually there was drumming.

The solid waste approach to the traditional Wake is community based, and involves community members, community based workers from different government Ministries and Departments as well as NGOs discussing issues related to solid waste management.

Cultural Wakes were held in all of the communities on mainland St.Vincent, where dumps were being closed.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this activity were:

- To create awareness within these communities about the importance of solid waste management
- To foster closer links with these communities
- To set the pace for a change of attitude as far as solid waste management is concerned (no more dumping in the areas where the dumps were located).

Participating Agencies

- Ministry of Health & the Environment
- The Forestry Division
- Community Development Division
- Local performing artistes and drama groups
- Community Members
- Nzimbo's Drumming Group

Format

- Drumming was used to mobilise the community and introduce the activity.
- Cultural presentations indigenous to those particular communities, or to the country in general. These included skits, choral speeches, chanting that is encouraged by the Master of ceremonies, and Calypsos.
- Short presentations or speeches from community members as well as from Public Servants, solid waste personnel and NGO staff members working in that community.
- Music provided by a D J which served to facilitate gathering of the people
- There was a Master of Ceremonies, and in the case of the first wake one of our local internationally known comedians, 'Saluche' performed this role.
- There was also the provision for impromptu presentations from the audience.

Lessons Learnt

- Best held in the open, thus the weather plays an important role
- May be unable to control total outcomes, e.g level of participation and sometimes quality of presentations
- This is a low cost activity that is not only educational but can also be entertaining

Outcomes

- Community that is sensitised
- Request from organisations and schools to facilitate educational sessions
- Community groups initiating cleanup activities
- Extensive media coverage (print and electronic)

Level of success

- Immediate improvement in cleanliness of that community

THE MOTOR CADE AND WHISTLE STOP

- One negative outcome of the absence of an organised waste collection system is illegal dumping. In small island states one of the areas most affected by this problem is the coast. In St.Vincent & the Grenadines this is a major problem affecting not only the fishing industry but tourism as well. In June of 2002 with the help of the local Coastguard, the CWSA Solid Waste Management Unit took the media on a trip around the island. In attendance also, were the Ministers of Tourism and Agriculture as well as senior members of their staff, to have a first hand look at the effects of these coastal dumps.

MOTORCADE & WHISTLE STOP CON'T

As was expected the situation to is bad. A clean up effort would require massive amounts of financial and other resources. In some areas cleaning up will be near impossible because of the sheer drops and steep cliffs. A mass education campaign was required immediately; followed by more intense individual and community programmes to put a stop to the illegal dumping. Our response: an approach often utilised by politicians during election campaigns, the Motorcade and Whistle Stop. Two such activities were held, one on the Windward coast of the island, and the other on the Leeward end. They were held about one month apart. The Ministers of Tourism and Education participated in the first Motorcade. The Minister of Health & the Environment participated in the second.

Objectives

- **To create awareness among the targeted communities, of the need to stop dumping over bank sides along the coastal areas.**
- **To encourage communities to become involved in cleanup activities.**
- **To assess levels of knowledge about solid waste management and about the Unit's educational programmes**

Participating Bodies

A group of people are seen from behind, wearing orange life jackets on a boat. The background shows a body of water and distant hills. A semi-transparent white text box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing a list of participating bodies.

- **Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries**
- **Ministry of Tourism**
- **Public Health Department**
- **Media Houses**

Format

The format varied based on our location. For the first motorcade, which was held on the Windward side of the island, all participants journeyed to the furthest point, Sandy Bay. Speeches were given to educate the residents about the ill effects of dumping and included a 10-minute quiz. Prizes for the quiz included T-Shirts, Shopping Bags and Colouring Books. This was repeated at all stops. The Motorcade ended at the Diamond Landfill with a brief closing ceremony to thank all the people who participated.

The Leeward Motorcade started at the CWSA's Headquarters and ended at the farthest point. As in the case of the Windward motorcade, stops were made in communities along the way. A new quiz was developed, however the prizes given out were the same.

In order to spread the message Island wide one radio station carried live broadcast of the entire activity. A DJ provided appropriate music including the solid waste jingle during the motorcade.

Lessons Learnt

- Be prepared to dedicate an entire day for this activity
- For greatest impact and outreach choose Saturday, most people are at home and would get the information even if they do not attend the rally
- Subject to interference from the weather
- Relatively low cost. Requires however a great deal of leg work to organise
- Lack control over the level of participation

OUTCOMES & LEVEL OF SUCCESS

- **OUTCOMES**

- National publicity due to the activity being aired on national radio
- Communities given a chance to actively participate
- Distribution of promotional material including reusable shopping bags
- Increase in the requests for assistance in community clean up campaigns
- Increase in the number of calls to report incidents of illegal dumping

- **LEVEL OF SUCCESS**

- Public became more aware of solid waste management issues

THE TEA MEETING

On June 6th, 2003, the Solid Waste Management Unit hosted a Tea Meeting at a Primary School, together with two groups from a community called Park Hill.

Tea Meetings form part of our cultural heritage but had been dormant for many years. Most of the people who were involved with the production of Tea Meetings have passed on without being able to share their knowledge and skills with another generation.

A Tea Meeting involves speeches and singing; it is a tradition that came out of slavery, where slaves tried to imitate their Masters behaviour and speech when they had their meetings. Thus speeches at Tea Meetings are filled with malapropisms and mispronunciations, which instead of taking away from the content, only serves to increase interest and enjoyment. (See Appendix 1 for a sample speech)

Tea Meeting Con't

Although the practice is common to many of the other Caribbean islands the format differs slightly, and it is only in St. Vincent and the Grenadines that it is called a Tea Meeting. Tea Meetings are traditionally held at Easter, with the central theme being the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in August focussing on the abolition of slavery, and at Christmas when the focus is on the birth of Christ. It is customary that the hall used be decorated with flowers and fruit, which the audience is free to take with them or eat during the proceedings, along with buns and ginger beer the main traditional refreshments. With the focus of this Tea Meeting being solid waste management, we chose to shift from the traditional times and dates, the traditional prize items a ram goat, a live chicken and cakes however remained the same.

Objectives:

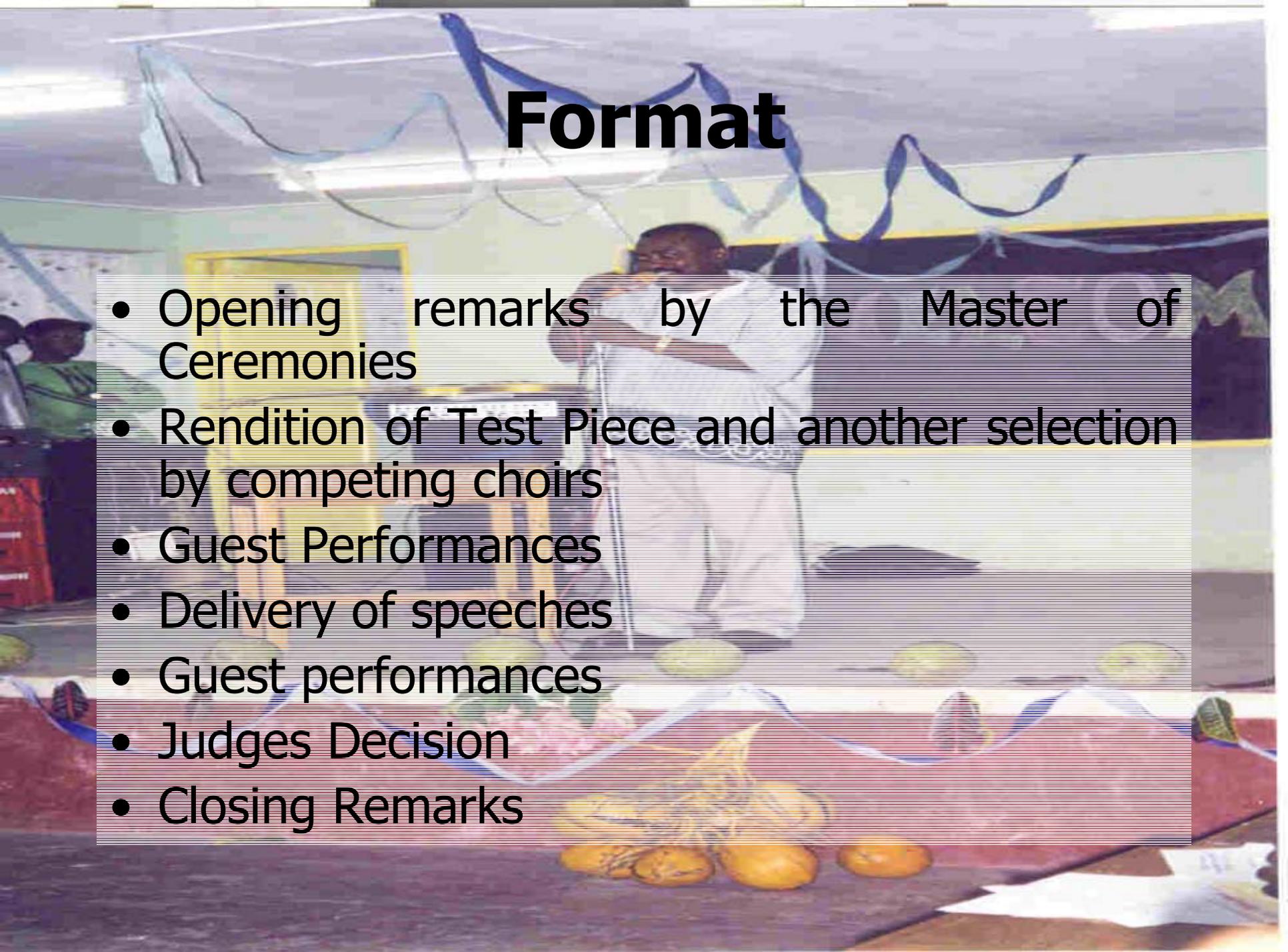
- To encourage older members of the society to become actively involved in the solid waste management education process, at the same time share their experiences and knowledge of this activity
- To revive a dormant cultural activity and use it as an avenue for education about solid waste management
- To strengthen the partnership approach to solid waste management

Participating Agencies

A photograph of a community event. In the foreground, several green coconuts are scattered on the floor. In the background, a group of people, including children and adults, are gathered around a large chalkboard. One person is writing on the board. The room is decorated with blue streamers hanging from the ceiling. The overall atmosphere is festive and community-oriented.

- **Park Hill Adolescent Group**
- **IMPACT 2000 (a community group)**
- **Members of the Park Hill and surrounding communities**
- **National Insurance Scheme Cultural Group**

Format



- Opening remarks by the Master of Ceremonies
- Rendition of Test Piece and another selection by competing choirs
- Guest Performances
- Delivery of speeches
- Guest performances
- Judges Decision
- Closing Remarks

Lessons Learnt

- **Because of the nature of the activity, Tea Meetings can be lengthy**
- **If you chose to work with more than one group, ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined to prevent problems previous to, or during the activity**
- **Requires a great deal of organization and 'leg work'**
- **Requires people knowledgeable about the art form to assist in its organization**
- **Low cost, but entertaining and educational at the same time**

Outcomes

- Allowed for impromptu audience participation
- Interest generated in the use of tea meetings as an educational approach
- Facilitated active participation by all age groups in singing or speech
- The live radio coverage of the programme served to enlighten people who did or could not attend the activity
- A community that has become more waste management conscious, e.g. they extended the education process by including sessions on solid waste management in the children's summer camp programme held recently

Level of Success

- Attendance in excess of five (5) hundred persons from all age groups
- Participating groups pledged to continue their involvement in this activity by undertaking clean up campaigns, and organising educational sessions in their communities
- Continued call from the public for another Tea Meeting

➤ Conclusion

The Central Water Sewerage & Solid Waste Authority of St Vincent & the Grenadines has chosen to use different methods that are:

- > Culturally relevant and suitable for public participation, allow for information on solid waste management to reach the public.**
- > Low cost due to budget constraint.**
- > Allow for direct feedback that is not readily available or forth coming using other media for example, the radio and television.**

Perhaps the best feature of these activities is that they allow for questions and answers, and for clarification on matters relating to waste management or whatever else is being discussed. As the Company grows and it's focus shifts, we will endeavour to challenge ourselves to continue to institute educational programmes that are innovative, effective and relevant to the needs and educational levels of our customers; and will allow us to provide highest quality services that are affordable and accessible to all.

Have ideas, questions and or suggestions? Contact us at P.O Box 363, Kingstown, St.Vincent and the Grenadines, telephone 784-457-0220, 784-456-2946, fax 456-2552 or email CWSA@caribsurf.com or swmu@vincysurf.com.