



USING SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ARTS TO TRANSFORM GENDER NORMS:



CASE STUDY FROM THE
YOUNG MEN INITIATIVE



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March, 2015



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INTRODUCTION

CARE International Balkans has garnered a reputation for its work on youth development, gender equality, gender-based violence, women's empowerment and community mobilization. In 2006-2014, it undertook a bold initiative to engage young men (aged 15-19) in addressing violence and the harmful practices of masculinity in close collaboration with local partner organizations.

Donor funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through CARE Norway, supported the Young Men Initiative (YMI) to the present day. Youth partner organizations¹ continue to play a leading role in expanding the network of young men who are spreading the message and becoming champions for change.

One of the reasons YMI has been so successful in popularizing young men's engagement in the fight against violence and gender inequality is its communication strategy. Since the start of its operations, YMI has collaborated closely with Smart Kolektiv, a Belgrade-based organization that provides support to its campaign development and media campaign, including documentary movies on young men and violence. When they first began planning their social marketing campaigns in the technical schools in 2008, youth partner or-

ganizations, with support from Smart, adopted graffiti and other street art to appeal to youth. They offered creative arts workshops to young men with a wide spectrum – RAP, flash mobs, DJ-ing, culture jamming, movie making, photography, cartoon drawing, etc. Their creative teams included young teens who knew how to tailor messages to their peers.

The YMI team also benefitted from its relationship with the Instituto Promundo, a Brazil-based organization that promotes caring, non-violent, and equitable masculinities and gender relations in its many programs around the globe. YMI's program is an adaptation of Promundo's methodology for engaging youth in achieving gender equity.² What became Program "M" in the Balkans draws on the good practices of Promundo's experience in 22 countries over the past decade. Thus, for outreach campaigns to be successful, social and educational messages are best delivered through popular forms of entertainment, such as TV, radio dramas, theatre, music, and interactive computer applications.³

Knowing which forms of media are most popular and accessible to target populations is the first step. The second is involving young men and women, who are the target audience, in all the stages of campaign development, as YMI has done.

Equally, as the "Macho Men" example below demonstrates, those best placed to advocate for a change in social norms within the broader society are the young men who have personally grappled with their own beliefs and allowed themselves to be challenged.

YOUTH, SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ARTS

Facebook or Twitter, is a social space where young men and women “hang out” is unremarkable in the Balkans as in many other parts of the globe.

In the current day and age, it is to be expected that any youth-based work would include social media as part of its communication strategy. That social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, is a social space where young men and women “hang out” is unremarkable in the Balkans as in many other parts of the globe. It may not replace the coffee shop, the gym, or the sports facility, but its omniscience makes it possible for many more youth to meet at the same time and the same place. The YMI has made deliberate efforts to identify these spaces so that it could reach more youth. The learning that is possible now through new forms of social media has a quality of autonomy to it that traditional learning venues, such as the classroom, do not. Thus, the first case example of the pazisex website allows youth to explore topics of personal importance in ways that formal education could not. Peer-based learning is a higher-order attribute of the exchange made possible on social media sites.

“Contemporary social media are becoming one of the primary “institutions” of peer culture for U.S. teens, occupying the role that was previously dominated by the informal hanging out spaces of the school, mall, home, or street.”

Ito et. al. Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Project (2008:35).

The 5 case examples below emerged as innovations in the creative arts by youth and mainly for youth. The social media aspect of each artistic piece has provided a platform for communicating the message and publicizing the event instantly and widely. Together, the 5 innovations exemplify the diversity in the use of the creative arts and social media that is possible, when youth are given the reins to support their ideas.

In their order of presentation,
the **5 case examples** are:

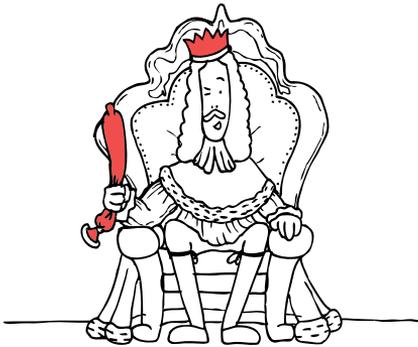
1. **The pazisex website**, an educational, youth-friendly website on sexual and reproductive health
2. **The Zvonko quizzes**, a series of 3 short films that challenge young men's notion of manhood
3. **"Macho Men"**, a performance representing a form of documentary theatre
4. **A rap song titled "Qellimi"** by a popular rap artist carrying the messages of YMI
5. **BMK TV**, a group of young men who became a movie recording crew

All 5 examples demonstrate the efforts of YMI's "Budi Musko" or BE A MAN campaign challenging others, not only youth, to re-assess the social norms on manhood within the schools and in the communities. It extends the individual learning that takes place in the educational sessions of Program "M" in the schools to collective efforts, for the most part by the "Budi Musko" clubs (BMC clubs), to affect structural change at the level of social norms and government policies.



PAZI SEX

Awareness raising
campaign on sexual
and reproductive
health



*ILLUSTRATION FROM THE WEB PAGE PAZISEX.NET

One of the four principal themes of YMI's Program in its educational workshops and campaign activities is sexual and reproductive health. Teens value the knowledge they are able to gain from the program but many more teens do not have access to information at the sensitive age when they are just initiating a sexual life. There are no comprehensive school-based sex education programs and, while some non-profit organizations with youth-friendly services do pay some attention to this population, adolescents otherwise have to revert to informal and often unreliable sources on contraceptives, safe sex, sexuality, and reproductive health.



Under the auspices of the Young Men Initiative, the pazisex website was launched to deliver attractive, pertinent, and youth-friendly educational material on sexual and reproductive health to male and female adolescents just starting to explore their bodies, gender, and sexual development.

THE MAKING OF THE WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK CAMPAIGN

In October 2011 Smart Kolektiv had formed a Be a Man Campaign Team for developing its campaign strategy. The novelty of this approach was inviting a team of young men – as leaders and BMC members – known as the Awesome 8, and to engaging them in the creative process of developing the campaign from start to finish. Having the perspective of youth on how to reach their peers added value to the technical expertise of Smart’s professional staff and associates.

The novelty of this approach was engaging a team of young men in the creative process of developing the campaign

The following month, the BMC Awesome 8 gathered together to explore in-depth the issues of sexuality / SRH, ferret out the critical lessons to date, and decide the most effective means to communicate the messages they felt would most benefit their peers. The team of experts in the fields of communication, advocacy, guerrilla marketing, and social media development facilitated their discussions. Together, they agreed that a website should be the main vehicle for the campaign messaging. They set to work on the strategy for the campaign and the presentation of the educational content.

For content development, Smart Kolektiv engaged a psychologist and, as well, a copywriter to adapt the tone of the communication to the target group. They marshalled their local peer educators from their partner organizations to view and approve the content and to validate its relevance, appeal, and appropriateness to the target audience. Smart Kolektiv’s team of creative associates developed the visual presentation and website design to make it attractive, dynamic, and alluring.

Smart Kolektiv communication staff, with the help of a social media expert, went on to develop the Facebook campaign strategy. Because Facebook consistently proved to be one of the most effective communication channels in their work with youth, they chose it as the principal tool to promote the pazisex website. By publicizing the website on the BMC Facebook page, the project hoped to reach a wider audience



2,000 NEW VISITORS EACH MONTH



outside of the schools and communities where the program was being implemented. Also, because not all partners / countries could openly promote the pazisex website in schools, they were able to publicize it through their BMC member Facebook page. By raising awareness about the importance of education on SRH, it hoped to encourage dialogue amongst youth on the issues affecting them.

CONTENT

“Pazi sex” literally means “watch out! – sex,” but is taken to mean “be careful! – sex.”

“Pazi sex” literally means “watch out! – sex,” but is taken to mean “be careful! – sex.” The website design divides the topic of sexual and reproductive health into five sections representing different stages of teenage sexual development. In its youth-friendly fashion, the website invites the visitor to click on animated cartoon images of a boy and a girl as a segway to the particular issue, be it first sex, bodily changes during puberty, contraceptives, and so on. Side panels have click-able topics with text providing more information on the topic (see example in textbox). Easy-to-grasp cartoon images accompany text and depict scenario that youth are likely to confront.

All the content is made available in four languages: BiH languages, Croatian and Serbian language and in Albanian language on www.kujdessex.net.

The Facebook page content was created and is administered by the Smart Kolektiv community manager and members of the Awesome 8 team.

LAUNCH

The website and Facebook page were launched on Valentine’s Day, February 14th, 2012. To date three of the five sections have been launched:

Discover sex or Discover yourself – *Otkrij se(x)*
Protect sex or Protect yourself – *Zastiti se(x)*
Prepare (for) sex – *Spemi se(x)*

Each section was launched consecutively. This was a tactical move to put the spotlight on each of the topics and to promote each with a separate FB campaign. Every three to four months a new section of the website was launched and promoted with a special campaign. This approach increased the viral capacity of the campaign as a whole and kept the media buzz high during the two-month period. As a result, the number of Facebook page likes and website visits was higher than otherwise attainable.

The two remaining sections – Play sex (*igraj sex*) and Open sex (*otvori sex*) – are expected to be completed in another month or so (October 2013).

Every three to four months a new section of the website was launched and promoted with a special campaign.

EFFECTS

Website outreach:

An average of 2,000 new visitors each month

78 % are new visitors and 22 % are returning visitors

40 % of visitors come from Serbia, 23 % from BiH, 21 % from Croatia and other visitors come from Montenegro (3%), Germany, Austria etc.

Facebook page outreach:

Total number of likes/followers: **1,117**

Gender

33.9 % Females

66.1 % Males

Age

31.9 % - 13 to 17

57.5 % - 18 to 24

Country

70 % from Serbia

20.9 % from BiH

2.41 % from Croatia



1,117 LIKES
& FOLLOWS

Section: Prepare for sex

Subtopic: Consent

It is important to know that you can always say no. Even when you and your partner have reached second or third base ... you have the right to change your mind and quit. If one insists on a sexual act it is no longer sex, but rape. When we're not sure that we want something, we probably do not want to it's your decision and don't be pressured by commercials, sites for teens of Hollywood movies.

If you're not sure if your partner wants it, ask him/her:

Are you OK with this?

Do you want to continue?

Do you want me to stop?

For yes / no questions, there are only two answers:

Yes sometimes means maybe, but NO always means NO!

SILENCE is not equal approval. And even more: in some situations, silence of your partner may mean that they are embarrassed to refuse.

SUCCESS STORIES:

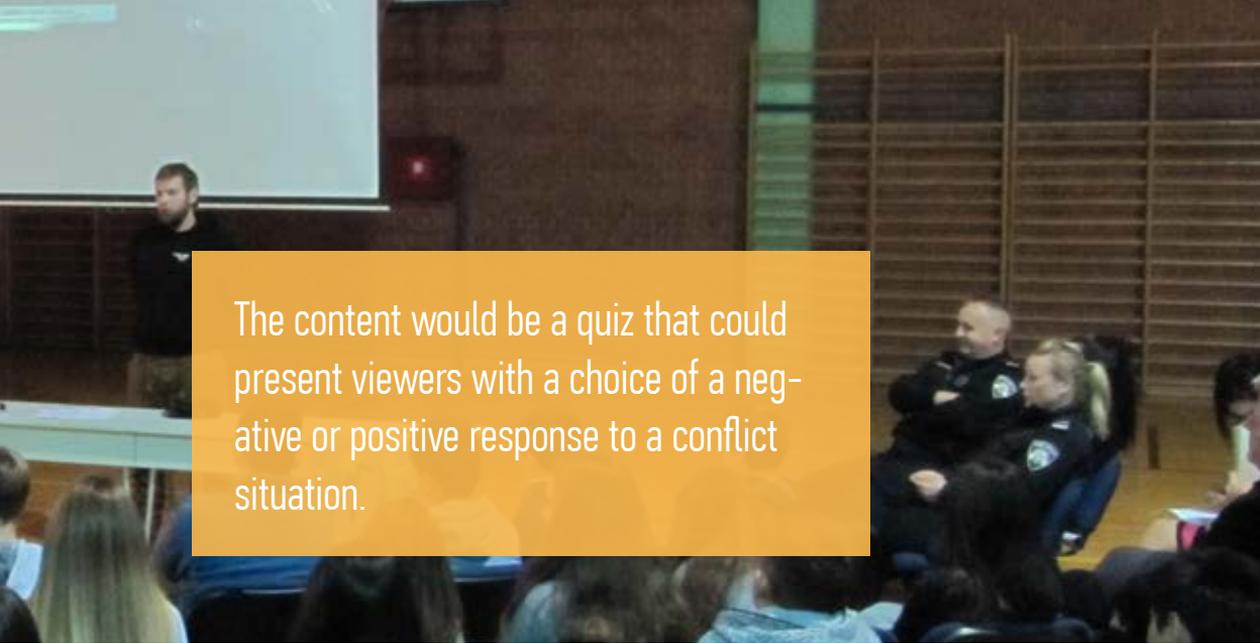
- After launch, Smart Kolektiv received a number of emails from other professionals in the business of website development, animation, copywriting, campaigns, graphic designers and others in the creative arts praising the website and approach to this subject.
- Several individuals and groups offered feedback, confirming the website to be a useful tool for education of young people.
- Website www.budisvoja.rs or "Be Yourself" has recognized pazisex as one of the most relevant websites for sexual education and female health. This website supports girls to be what they want, believe in themselves, discover their strengths, and fulfill their potential.



ZVONKO QUIZZES

Short films

Zvonko quizzes are a set of three short films that challenge young men's notions of manhood and spotlight behaviors of peer violence, gender-based violence, and discrimination. The youth partner organization, Status M, that produced the films with Kino Klub Zagreb (Cinema Club Zagreb), was aiming for a group of short viral clips that could be used in their BE A MAN campaign work. So the message had to be catchy, humorous, and educational all at the same time. No easy feat.



The content would be a quiz that could present viewers with a choice of a negative or positive response to a conflict situation.

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In early 2011, a group of clever young men in Zagreb from Status M staff and BMC clubs, inspired by the idea, began meeting and brainstorming. They knew their main target group was young men from 15 to 19. Now they had to figure out precisely what messages they wanted to send, the most effective format, and how to treat a serious subject in a positive and lighthearted manner. So they decided the content would be a quiz that could present viewers with a choice of a negative or positive response to a conflict situation. They agreed it needed a young man as the main character and crafted a scenario of the character broadcasting his own TV show from his basement. The entrails of a young boy's mind, the trappings of his cellar hideaway, and the complicity of the cinematography weave together well in the final effect.

Three short films that challenge young men's notions of manhood and spotlight behaviors of peer violence...

Zvonko is a young guy who is fed up with the unwritten rules about manhood and the stereotypes...

For the next six months, this group of young men brought the idea to fruition with professionals from the film industry. They mapped out the details of each scene for each of the three themes, wrote the script, and then went in search of a budding young actor to take the part. Once this happened, they completed the montage of three one-minute (1:13 mns) films in Croatian and added French and English subtitles.

Zvonko is a young guy who is fed up with the unwritten rules about manhood and the stereotypes, taboos, prejudices, gender inequalities and acts of violence in society. He takes action and decides to “change the rules.” In the film, Zvonko invites viewers to a psychological test on “how to be a man” (“Budi Musko”) and presents them with three scenarios or ABC choices of how to respond to a situation. The lessons in the three films respectively are about (i) how not to be a bully (<http://youtu.be/ztVm8i-yvcY>), (ii) how to respect girls (<http://youtu.be/eDRtEmatza4>), and (iii) how not to discriminate (<http://youtu.be/l5Wj22oe9og>).

The Zagreb team planned to take the movies on tour in November 2011 as part of a multi-city teaser campaign which they called “Be a Man: Change the Rules” (“Budi muško, mijenjaj pravila”). At the same time, they wanted to take advantage of the pre-election climate going on in Croatia. They developed the media tactic of nominating Zvonko for the election and asking people to vote for (like) him. Viewers could upload their own short video to the “Vote for Zvonko” (“Glasaj Za Zvonka”) Facebook page, explaining why they would vote for him. The BMC members themselves loaded around 20 videos. You hear Zvonko complaining that the rights of young men are constantly being violated because they have to fight to prove their manhood, are not allowed to cry, are forced to drink, and are mocked when they say they’re in love. By voting for Zvonko, men will be free to be gentle, to smile, to create and not destroy, and so on. In only a few hours after posting the videos, the Facebook page pulled in 150 likes. As of August 2013, the page has earned 1,540 likes (www.facebook.com/GlasajZaZvonka).

As part of a strategy to entice the public and build up the character who was “running for elections,” the team upload-



ZVONKO QUIZZES

Short films

ed photos of Zvonko talking to important people and having many kinds of adventures as he toured around Europe. It successfully attracted local media attention and got them on national TV (HRT) and radio shows. An article was posted on 18 Oct. 2011 on the “Večernji list” portal about the online campaign and announcing the tour. The mystique around Zvonko broke on the eve of the campaign caravan tour, 2 November, 2011, when the short movies were posted to the Facebook page and his identity revealed.

The Ministry of Interior sought out Status M to collaborate to develop and offer a training in violence prevention to the police.

With funding from UNDP, Zvonko's pre-election caravan took to the road, starting in Zagreb and stopping in Karlovac, Križevci, Lepoglava, Virovitica, Beli Manastir and Vukovar over 8 days. The campaign activities for the tour were supported by SMART Kolektiv, YMI's partner organization specialized in campaign and media design. Around 30 BMC members from Croatia, Status M staff, and others from Sarajevo and Belgrade participated in the tour. Each day was filled with activities held at the schools – introductory workshops on the theme of gender and sex, the film projections, graffiti drawing on the school wall, informal chats with students, and information sharing about the BMC. The students then got to submit their votes for Zvonko. The campaign's reach is impressive – 15,000 people who viewed the Zvonko films; 100 short workshops with more than 1,500 participants; three appearances on national TV; and more than 40 local media attendances.

With the success of the tour under their belts, the team strategized how to make good use of the material as part of the educational workshops. Status: M developed the methodology for a 45-minute session of movie presentations followed by question-answer with students, keeping in the style of a quiz. It became a practice to incorporate the films into the educational workshops. As of this writing, the Zagreb team has held quiz workshops with more than 1000 students from 24 elementary schools in 11 cities. The team also used the occasion of the *International day of elimination of violence against women* to hold parallel workshops in Zagreb, Rijeka, Osijek and Split elementary schools.

The Ministry of Interior sought out Status M to collaborate to develop and offer a training in violence prevention to the police. UNDP had been supporting the Ministry in a project called "Living my life without violence," a course offered to higher classes of elementary schools. Discussions led to Status M developing a one-day training course for the prevention police officers and SWAT cops. This prepared them to lead short workshops in the schools using the Zvonko movies on the subject of gender and violence. Plans were for the police to conduct the training in 10 elementary schools subsequent to this. The module will soon be approved by

the Ministry of Sports, Education and Science for use in all the schools to be taught by police, peer educators, or others who have been given the training.

The Zvonko quiz movies have become a big hit since. They continue to be presented as part of the educational workshops in the technical schools. The three short films had a special showing just before the opening of the annual Croatian film festival “21. dani hrvatskog filma” in April 2012 and drew enthusiastic applause. In June 2012, the Zagreb city office organized workshops for two elementary schools in a small concert hall for the viewing of the Zvonko films as part of an educational event on the theme of violence.

Youth partner organizations say, that after an audience watches the movies, it is much easier to work with the group. It provokes laughter and the positive mood it creates makes everyone want to participate.

**15000 PEOPLE
VIEWED ZVONKO
FILMS**

**1500 PEOPLE
ATTENDED
WORKSHOPS**

**40 AND MORE
MEDIA ATTEND-
ANCES**

MUŠ KAR ČINE

Koncept, režija i dramaturgija:
Milena Bogavac i Vojislav Arsić

Ko-autori i izvođači:
Aleks Surtov, Đorđe Živadinović Grgur,
Jovan Zdravković, Marko Panajotović,
Nemanja Puvaca, Nikola Pavlović,
Uroš Novović, Rastko Vujić

Koreografija i scenski pokret:
Ljiljana Tasić

Originalna muzika:
Vladimir Pejković

Režija dokumentarnog filma:
Ivan Stojiljković

Dizajn zvuka:
Mirosljub Vlačić i Milan Kovarbašić

Dizajn svetla:
Dragan Đurković

Šef tehnike:
Ljubomir Radivojević

Stručna konsultantkinja:
Jelena Bogavac

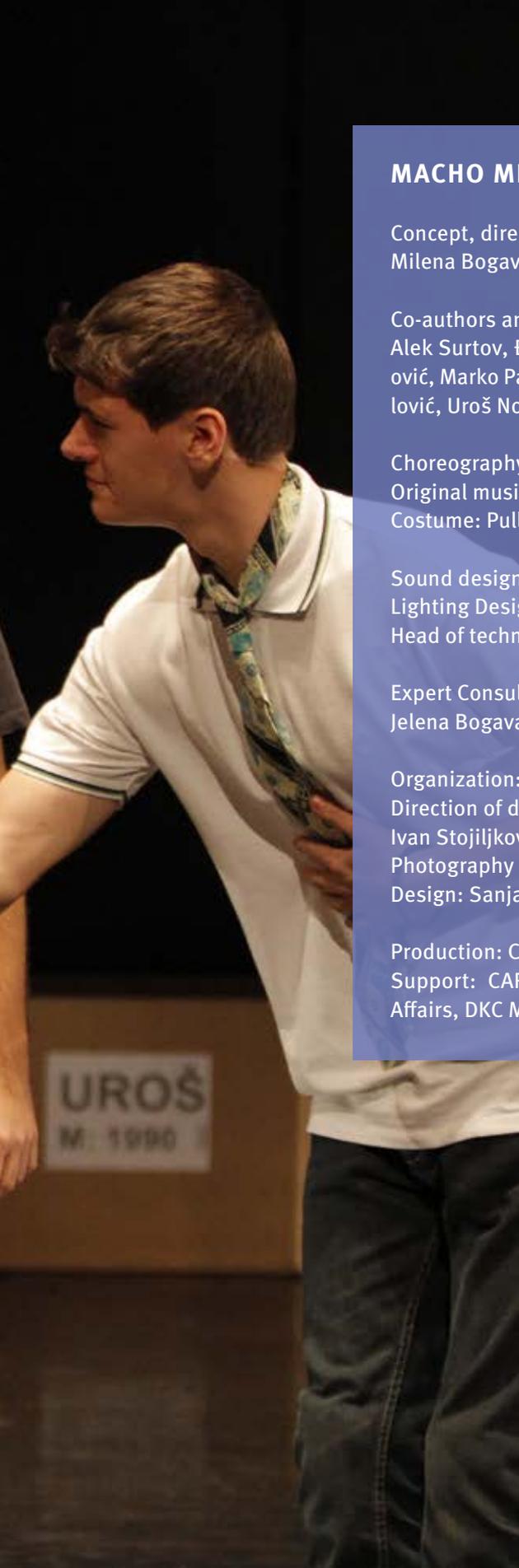
Organizacija:
Aneta Goranović

One of the methodologies which the Belgrade-based Centar E8 (the Centre for the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles) uses in its work with youth is drama. Since its engagement with YMI, Centar E8 has hoped for the opportunity to introduce theatre as an educational tool to address hegemonic forms of masculinity. In realizing this aspiration, the theatre performance “Macho Men” surpassed even their own expectations.



MACHO MEN

Theater play



MACHO MEN

Concept, direction and dramaturgy:
Milena Bogavac and Vojislav Arsić

Co-authors and performers:
Alek Surtov, Đorđe Živadinović Grgur, Jovan Zdravković, Marko Panajotović, Nemanja Puvača, Nikola Pavlović, Uroš Novović

Choreography and scene movement: Ljiljana Tasić
Original music: Vladimir Pejković
Costume: Pull My Daisy

Sound design: Miroljub Vladić
Lighting Design: Dragan Đurković
Head of technology: Ljubomir Radivojević

Expert Consultants:
Jelena Bogavac and Mila Manojlović

Organization: Adnan Cviko
Direction of documentary movie:
Ivan Stojiljković
Photography and Video: Miloš Mitrović
Design: Sanja Drakulić

Production: Center E8 and Bitef theater
Support: CARE NWB, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DKC Majdan, Alma Quatro

“Macho Men” is an experimental form of theatre referred to as “documentary theatre.”

Staff intimately involved with the piece talk about “theatre-based education” as the most powerful tool for social emancipation. In fact, the use of theatre in education has been around for awhile, undergoing somewhat of a resurgence since the HIV/AIDS epidemic.⁴ It engages the audience’s emotions and can address sensitive issues, not easily “talked about” in profound ways. Theatre in *peer education* is typically scripted and performed by youth for their peers. The power of appeal is in the characters themselves who use the same language, are ‘hip,’ and are strongly familiar. Success translates less into fame than the actor’s capacity to become a role model for others. Equally important, say the staff, is the transformation of the young men participating in the performance. The six-month production process was a training ground, as much for their own beliefs about gender equality and manhood as for the technical aspects of developing a theatre piece. Not all of the 10 young men who auditioned and were selected stayed the course; three dropped out before the performance hit the stage.

“Macho Men” is an experimental form of theatre referred to as “documentary theatre.” This genre sits somewhere in between art and politics, bringing to the stage critical social issues. The script sources documentary material from the performers’ own life stories, events in the historical trajectory, and social phenomena that characterize the society in which events transpire. The material is conveyed to the audience through a dialogue between performers who change character; use body gestures, movement and few props; and share the same space with the audience who are cajoled but not expected to respond.

CE8 did not hire professional actors; when young men auditioned, they were not asked to act but were interviewed about their interest in theatre and in research on masculinity and gender. They were asked questions about their education; background; hobbies; and opinions on masculinity, relations between men and women, violence and other issues they might recognize as affecting their generation. The production team selected 10 young men “with the most interesting personalities.” Two of them were, exceptionally, under-age at the time. One of them was a student of political science who later changed his major to acting.

In documentary theatre, “text,” or “the word” is foreground material. Performers are co-authors of the script and scenes. The rehearsals are the space in which the young men develop or choose their own lines and co-create the dialogue. With the aid of technical workshops and methodological games⁵ and a professional crew (trainers, dramatists, directors, a choreographer, composers), the young men learn to develop their own self-expression, improvise, and use the group energy to act. On-stage and in keeping with “postdramatic theatre,” the performers are vectors of the text. This is very different from conventional theatre where their role would be to depict people of a particular place and time.

In one scene, entitled “Patriotism” all the lights in the theatre are switched off. The performers are interacting with the audience in the dark and in silence. This moment comes right after the audience is asked if they would like to send them into army service (lights on). Now the spectators feel uncomfortable and ashamed because they know the actors are the right age for army service. They also feel an affection for the young men, who in the prior scenes, are playful and cheerful teens. Spectators are drawn into the meaning-making of the text. The interaction it provokes is not funny; it is serious and intense.

“Macho Men” was produced by Centar E8 in collaboration with Bitef Theatre, an icon of experimental theatre, including postdramatic performances and avant-garde dance. The Theatre continues its tradition of hosting an annual festival which it has managed to do through the turbulent times of the last 40 or so years, while maintaining its place in the family of international festivals.⁶ Bitef is the only theatre in Belgrade without its own ensemble of actors; it operates as a service for independent theatre groups or artists whose aesthetic and politics are a counterpoint to the mainstream.

The young men learn to develop their own self-expression, improvise, and use the group energy to act.

CONTENT

In their desire to fit in to a socially acceptable matrix of gender behavior, young men do many things that are detrimental to their physical and also mental health. Society expects of them to prove their masculinity by showing strength, determination, courage, a fighting spirit, and bravery, which

The main theme of the play is masculinity and the way it is created and dealt with in the local culture.

often leads them to destruction, even self-destruction. Brought up in a culture where the expressive male is a sign of weakness, young men repress their emotions and transform them into destructive behavior. This theatre performance is intended to draw attention to this problem but also to document the story of the generation born during the Balkan wars. This is a generation whose value system was formed during political upheaval / transition and remains confusing and unstable.

The main theme of the play is masculinity and the way it is created and dealt with in the local culture. The idea and the message it seeks to convey is one of freedom, personal achievement and efforts to overcome the culturally imposed norms that prevent young men from being themselves.

Much of the play's symbolism is contained in the "box" as the main prop. Performers step into and out of their individual boxes, revealing the names and birthdates carved on the front of the box at the end of the show. The thread of the message is captured in a set of keywords and their definitions:

Masculinity, noun.

1. Refers to properties that are characteristic for persons of male sex.
 - Sex. Biological attributes of the organism in relation to the role of reproduction.
2. Refers to properties that are characteristic for persons of male gender.
 - Gender. Social and cultural determination of person and their behavior in relation to their sex.

Box, noun.

1. Object that is used for packing other objects in it.
 - Sex. Box for packing gender stereotypes.
 - Gender. Habits, rituals and customs from these boxes.

Freedom, noun.

1. The possibility/right/desire of beings to think for themselves and act on their own.

Question: can you be free when you are in a cramped box?

Answer: _____

Proposal: Unpack the box and pack in it what you want!

In other words: *Be a man, in the way you want and not in the way others think it should be!*

The dialogue is constructed from the life experiences of the performers, growing up in the Balkans. In the process, they drew inspiration for some of the content from people like



Much of the play's symbolism is contained in the "box" as the main prop.

Steve Biddulph, Christina Hoff Sommers, Robert Bly and Michael Messner. They read the comedy play *Defending the Caveman* by Rob Becker, *The History of Masculinity in Europe (1450 – 2000)* by Wolfgang Schmale, and a slew of other readings on the topic.

The choreography is playful and dynamic, the actors “in-finitely charming” in the way they express their intimacy on stage.⁷ Much of it is satirical and leaves the spectators to make their own judgments.

A SAMPLE OF THE DIALOGUE:

*Who actually taught you how to be a man?
When you were little, who told you, who gave you a specific advice on the topic:
– Son, you as a man ...
– What? Me as a man, what?!
Consider it, while growing up you haven’t heard more than twenty such sentences.
You haven’t because there was no need for it. You were born into your gender, like in the middle of your native language when you said your first: mom, dad, grandma, miiiilk ... nobody had burdened you with lessons in grammar. Gender is such a strong construct of culture, that learning about it really isn’t necessary.*

A SECOND SAMPLE:

*A real man is a patriot.
He loves his people. Loves his country.
If you don’t love your country, it means that you don’t love your crew from the ‘hood!
If you don’t love your country, it means that you don’t love your school!
If you don’t love your country, it means that you don’t love the bar where you hang out!
If you don’t love your country, it means that you don’t love your yard and your neighbors!
I’m not judging, I’m not discriminating, I’m not labeling ... But who are these people who don’t love their country?
If you don’t love your country, it means that you don’t love mom and dad!
If you don’t love your country it means ...
that you’re not normal!*

One of the most important scenes in “Macho Men” is entitled “History lesson.” The actors dryly state the facts from the recent history of the Balkans, from the year of their birth (1990-1994) to 2012, when the play was premiered. They tick off an unabated succession of conflict and violence - war in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo; the NATO bombing; the years of isolation; the international embargo; the years from Milosevic’s uprising to the protests against him, etc. - as their lived experience. The audience is starkly reminded that these young men grew up witness to war crimes, sanctions, violence on the streets, electricity rations, hyperinflation. Some of them were refugees, other were singing popular patriotic songs that were being broadcast on TV during the NATO bombing. The oldest ones in the group joke that they lived in four countries without ever having to move - the Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Federative association of Serbia and Montenegro, and now the Republic of Serbia. The younger ones were more fortunate, with only three countries since birth.

One of the most important scenes in “Macho Men” is entitled “History lesson.”

PERFORMANCES

As of September 2013, the play had been performed 57 times and viewed by roughly 10,000 people. “Macho Men” premiered at the Bitez Theatre in November 2012. Performances were held every month, in different cities and theatres around Serbia. It also made its appearance at different festivals, most notably the Patosoffiranje festival offered to independent theatre groups who receive no government support, are socially engaged and low budget. This particular festival seeks to encourage young people and promote their participation in the experimental and alternative arts.

It also performed in the first year of the Youth Theatre Festival in Novi Pazar, a staging ground for performances by young people. In June 2012, “Macho Men” was entered in the festival “Ex Theater Fest” in Pančevo. Recently, the artistic director of the festival “Off Frame” invited “Macho Men” to perform and the play received rave reviews. “Off Frame” is a festival of socially engaged, applied and inclusive theatre, with performances translated into sign language.

...the process of developing “Macho Men” was so important, E8 made a documentary film.

Centar E8 felt that the process of developing “Macho Men” was so important, it made a documentary film about it that premiered at the Bitef theatre on 28 March, 2013, just before the performance of the play. The documentary was also promoted in the media and has premiered online.

The cast plans to continue performing and will be at the next, upcoming Bitef festival where it will also present a book “Macho men - a document about masculinity here and now” containing the text of the play and other relevant texts on the process of creating the performance. Centar E8 also plans to lead a workshop for theatre professionals interested in their methodology. Alongside continuing performances at the Bitef repertory theatre, “Macho Man” will go on tour again in Serbia and also abroad.

EFFECTS

The first level of effects is on the 10 young men who signed up for “Macho Men.” Their experiences living through the production of the play are recounted in the documentary film. Seeing it through to the end was a feat, especially after three members of the cast quit. The self-reflections by the young men suggest that it was a test of their “commitment” – to not only the play as a project, but a commitment to taking a mirror to oneself, and a commitment to the cause (“Be a Man”).

Yet, the rewards for those who stayed with it are apparent, as in the following comments:

I came to this project pretty late. But not late enough to discover a thing or two about myself and that “manhood” inside my head and body! It felt pretty awesome to be a part of this project because it made me ask myself, HM, WHAT IS A REAL MAN ANYWAY! Am I a real man? So it began ... Not sure enough to give you an answer though... But still... awesome experience! - Rastko Vujisić, actor

The entire process of working on this performance was such a long journey of finding new things out about what we're already supposed to know in our society, getting to know the other guys who were chosen for their attitude, just like you, being faced with long working hours, sometimes problems and some wonderful moments, too. And, that long journey ended with the beginning of a new, more exciting one - our performance. Everything we had accomplished we began to share with other people and were very happy when we got beautiful feedback from audiences wherever we went. That was the point. To show, in an interesting and unusual way, what we think a real man should be. It's such a great thing when you see people who are playing with you (not only colleagues, but the audience) and they love the game in every single step. It remains to be seen whether we were able to change anything for others, as much as it did for us. - Đorđe Živadinović Grgur, actor

During the process of making this play I realized how much I have done and said just because that's what was expected of me. This project influenced me to reconsider things that have happened to me, that are still happening, things I have done, the situations in which most of us have been at least once in our lives. It has made me think about those things and not “bury” them just because someone might think they shouldn't be talked and thought about. I like the fact that in this play we are showing that our society is full of prejudice and stereotypes, but we do not condemn, we just leave them out for the audience to decide whether it is right or not. - Nikola Pavlović, actor

The theatre quickly filled with young people but the play captivated people of all ages

The play was shown in the theatres and not in schools, so that young people would have the full experience of seeing it in a theatre. Many school groups attended the performance. The play appealed to youth especially, as it reflected back their everyday life situations including the presence of verbal and physical violence that often characterizes their gender relations. The theatre quickly filled with young people but the play captivated people of all ages, genders, nationalities, religions and levels of education. The older generation could relate to the circumstances in which their children were raised. The play succeeded in creating a receptive audience by using language that was politically correct without being sterile, employing healthy and intelligent humour, and addressing the topic of gender in an honest way. Through amassing feedback from theatre critics (below), blog entries and tweets from the public, and comments from young people who shared their impressions, the conclusion is an overall positive response.

REVIEWS

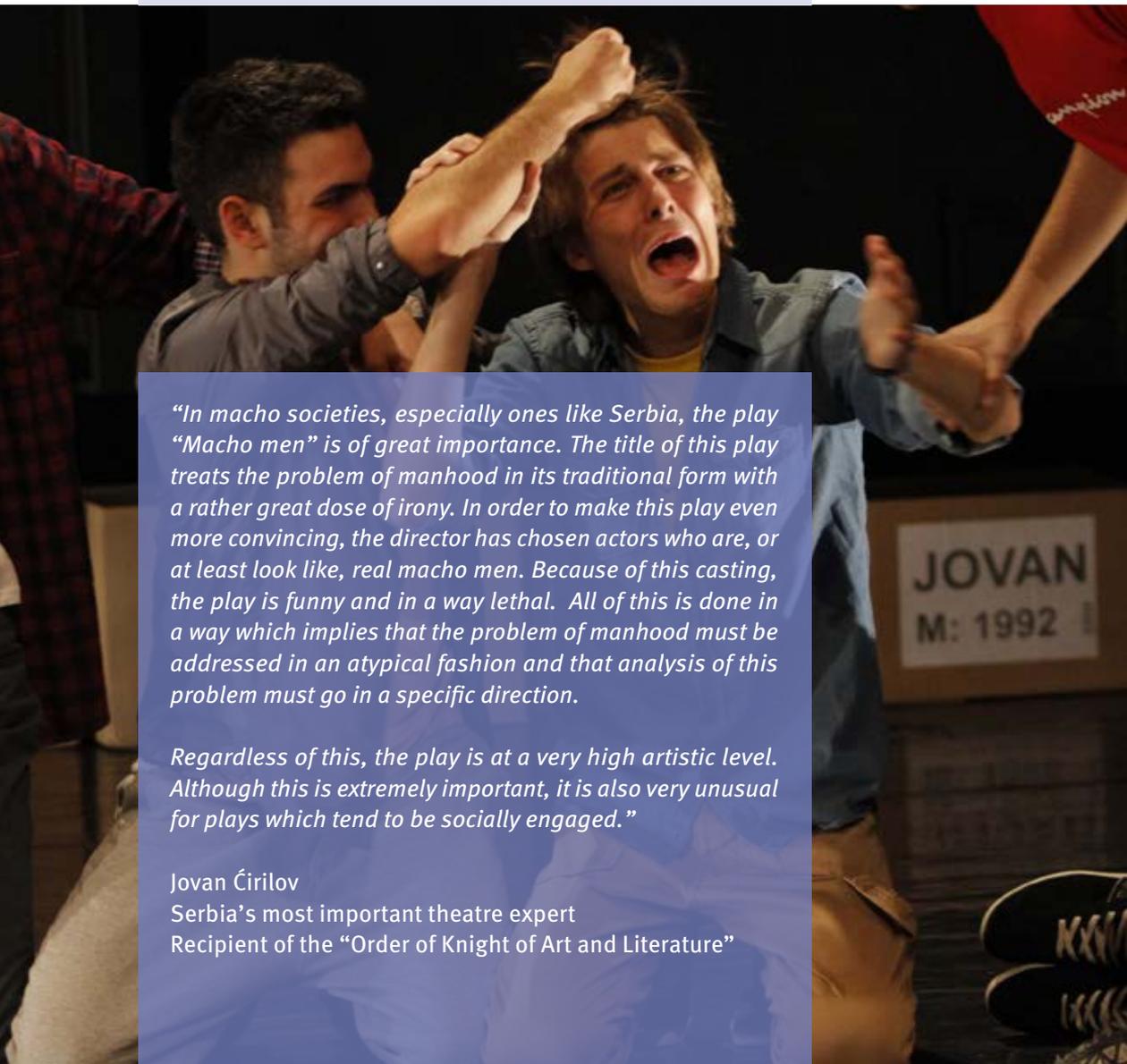
Here is a sampling of critiques by theatre aficionados.

“... In a theatrical sense ‘Macho men’ opens stylistic and meaningful levels and those were used by the skilled authors and actors in two ways. When speaking of something beyond their experience it is comical, but when speaking of the generation gap and childhood it is closer to being startling. The dramaturgy, which could be simplified as biological stages of childhood, adolescence, maturity, was dominated by intelligently contemplated and processed subjects and dilemmas. . . . All the diversity (randomness of subjects) and large number of layers (possibility of translation) is enhanced by the stylistical concept of the scenography. The performers act frontally like stand up comedians. At one point they even start rapping. The box-scenography and hints of mise en scène, the typically childish debauchery, and grimacing (when one of them plays the scene, the others join him and ‘spoil’ it) functioned very well.”

Igor Burić, theatre critic
„Dnevnik“, Novi Sad

“. . . The ‘Macho men’ opened my eyes. Not those macho men who spend their days in a gym, but the actors from the ‘Macho men’ play or, more precisely, from creative Centre E8. I went to the premiere without any expectations (even saying to myself: ‘My, something experimental again!’), but the things that were happening in front of my eyes for the next eighty minutes changed my view of macho men in Serbia and gentlemanship that strives to break through the thick layers of testosterone.”

Marina Anđelković, journalist
www.wannabemagazine.com



“In macho societies, especially ones like Serbia, the play “Macho men” is of great importance. The title of this play treats the problem of manhood in its traditional form with a rather great dose of irony. In order to make this play even more convincing, the director has chosen actors who are, or at least look like, real macho men. Because of this casting, the play is funny and in a way lethal. All of this is done in a way which implies that the problem of manhood must be addressed in an atypical fashion and that analysis of this problem must go in a specific direction.

Regardless of this, the play is at a very high artistic level. Although this is extremely important, it is also very unusual for plays which tend to be socially engaged.”

Jovan Ćirilov
Serbia’s most important theatre expert
Recipient of the “Order of Knight of Art and Literature”



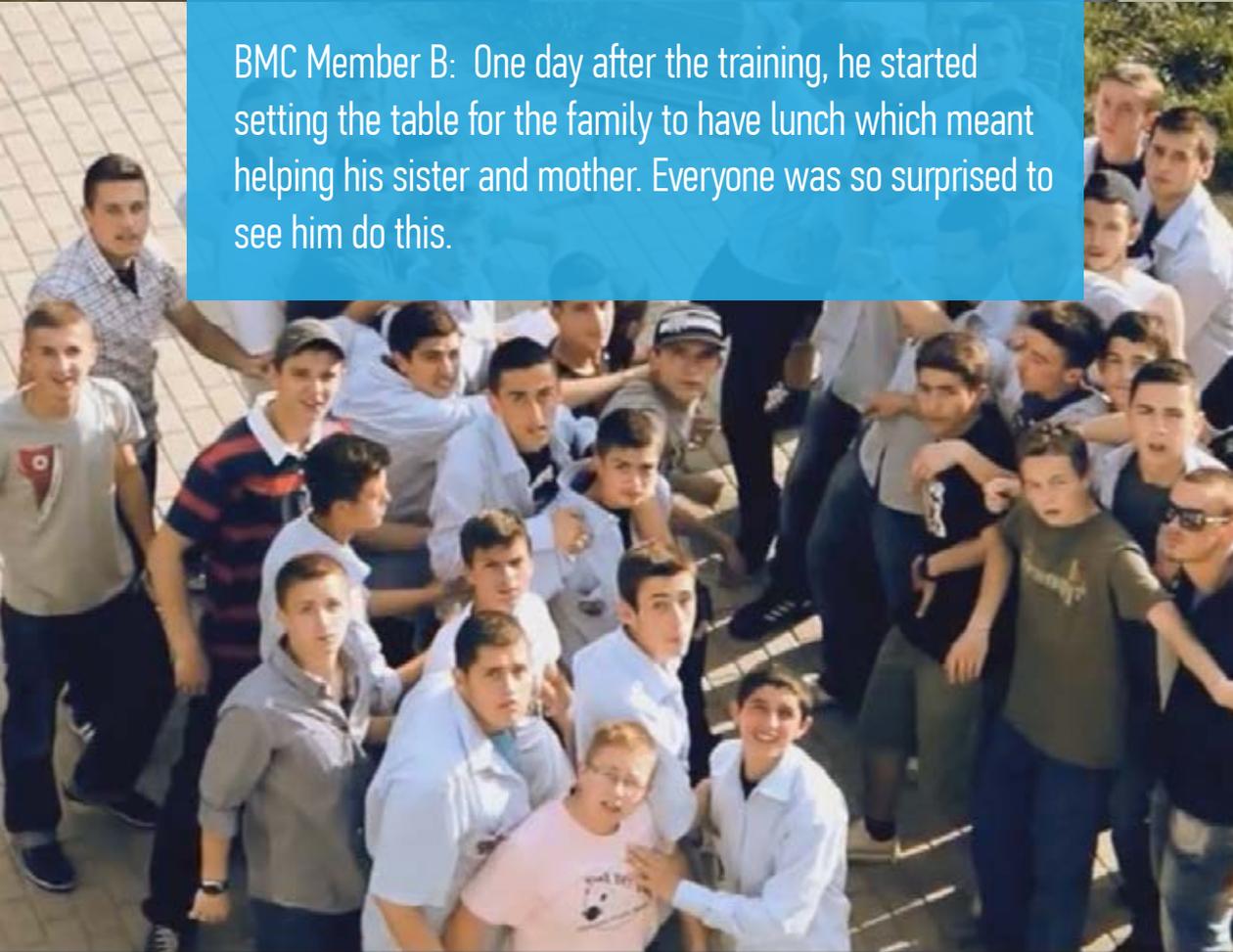
QELLIMI

RAP SONG

In November 2011, more than 20 new BMC members at the Electro Technical School “Gjin Gazulli” could hardly wait to get together. The Peer Educators Network (PEN) based in Prishtina, Kosovo, had only recently joined the YMI Project and the Coordinator, Petrit Bejdoni, was already receiving daily phone calls, SMS messages, and questions about starting new activities. On 2 November, Petrit sent a group SMS and was greeted by 23 eager faces at the café next to the school. But before their brainstorming began, they were given a chance to say what their parents, teachers, and friends thought of them, after taking the BMC training the month before.



BMC Member A, receiving feedback from his family: (paraphrased) *"You are now a real man because you don't miss class anymore, you don't come home late, and you should not stop being a part of that group. It is good for you."*



BMC Member B: One day after the training, he started setting the table for the family to have lunch which meant helping his sister and mother. Everyone was so surprised to see him do this.



Engaging celebrities in promotional campaigns has proven to be an effective project strategy

This group of teens poured out their enthusiasm over the idea of making small movie clips with messages for BMC members or one about BMC, hanging graffiti on the entrance to the school, creating a play, cleaning up the schoolyard, recording a song, or a combination of the above. To give space to their energy, PEN decided to organize a photo shoot of what it meant to “Be a Man.” The photos, such as the one to the right, were taken inside the house of a BMC member.

There was no shortage of ideas from BMC members, PEN or the Young Men Forum members who launched the teaser campaign in the school the month before. The idea of engaging a famous rapper to work with YMI in order to promote its message was not inconceivable, as the team had invited the rapper Lyrical Son at their campaign launch in October for a surprise visit. Students who agreed to participate in taking a short quiz were the ones to receive the SMS notice inviting them for a coffee with the rapper. The 27 students also received autographed CDs. This activity was highly motivational.

PEN chose this rap singer for his high profile on the VIP scene in Kosovo and also because he had a large following amongst the YMI target group. Engaging celebrities in promotional campaigns has proven to be an effective project strategy in reaching and appealing to adolescents. The rapper encouraged students during this lunch meeting to participate in “Be a Man” activities and to play an active role in society to demonstrate what this means.

Over the subsequent three months, around 50 BMC members and PEN staff rehearsed their roles in the video song called “Qellimi” or “Goal of Life.” The lyrics, the beat and the video were co-created by PEN and P.I.N.T special label for the YMI project. The song, like its title, carries the message that everyone has a life purpose, everyone has a reason for being here. So take the chance that life offers you now to reach your dreams. Don’t just live for today. Change your life – be honest, loving to people around you, act without violence, value your friends, and stay in school.



QELLIMI

RAP SONG

1 650 000
YOUTUBE
VIEWS

In the refrain, the rapper references his own life in the song to encourage youth to believe in themselves and forge ahead no matter what challenges life throws at them.

The 4-minute song had a smashing success. It ranked # one ranked in one the local TV playlists for the first two-three months after it came out (June 2012). It boasts 1,230,155 views and 5,380 likes on Youtube (<http://youtu.be/six-si7Jj1QE>) (Preview) to date (5 Sep. 2013).

PEN expects to be collaborating with another rap artist who has expressed an interest in also promoting the messages of BMC.

In the refrain, the rapper references his own life in the song to encourage youth to believe in themselves

LYRICS

LYRICS TRANSLATED FROM ALBANIAN

*I know for a fact that a purpose or a reason is formed
Together, with everyone, on the first day they're born*

*I'm trying to change things in a dream that is repeating
Don't just live for today, it's never too late*

*But time can't be brought back
It will only heal the wounds you had*

*Life is in front, you can change everything you do
It depends, only if you want to, or if you can too . . .*

*Love someone and do everything for them
like they would for you*

*Violence doesn't make you Men
When you do that to others or when
you cause that to others
Men makes you when you are close
to someone who needs you*

THE REFRAIN:

*I keep my door open wide
to all the troubles that may arrive
They can't stop me now because since the day I was alive
I was tough to challenge life and survive all the time
Always in the end I achieve the purposes I have in mind*

REVIEWS

These are some of the comments from the youtube official channel of P.I.N.T. It shows that it reached an audience beyond Kosovo and beyond exclusively Albanian speakers.

MARKO PERKOVIC:

respect from Croatia :) Keep Going.

FFITTAA1: 1 year since this song has been published has past so fast for me it looks like this song came out yesterday 14.06.2012-14.06.2013

LEELAINA071197: What language is this? Totally awesome stuff. I love how it sounds, even though I don't understand a single word. ;)

EL SERGIOGOLD: This should be the anthem of Kosovar youth #Respect

BLERIMARIFIOFFICIAL: you albanians are a bit stupid they put a video song with some girls dancing almost naked and he gets millions of views and this song is the song of our life with life problems and solutions this kind of song we need to have more <3 from Skopje.

BESTMUSIC: Replay replay replay

LONDON80043: The history in the song it's the same with my history!

MEGASIMPATIC: I would like to thank to all who created and released this beautiful song. It sounds incredible deep and real. Thanks to all of you. Greetings from Bulgaria. :)

ACMMUTDCR: Lyrical Son is calling through this song to show manhood without violence and still some of your comment's are offensive Peace and Respect to the fullest
LS



BMK TV

Multimedia workshops

YMI has made use of creative workshops to develop its campaigns and to keep youth engaged in the project. As BMC members and youth from the Young Men's Forum participate in educational workshops, youth camps, and other activities which the partners organize, they discover a diversity of outlets for expressing what they have learned, e.g., on gender equitable or non-violent practices, and for promoting the key messages. The process is empowering for them and a powerful means for reaching a broader number of youth.



Creative workshops teach young men and women a wide variety of multimedia techniques, such as movie making, photography, song making, DJ-ing, dance, and various forms of street art.



The workshops were hands-on and involved the actual practice of making video documentaries and short movies.

Creative workshops teach young men and women a wide variety of multimedia techniques, such as movie making, photography, song making, DJ-ing, dance, and various forms of street art. After more than three years of engaging young men in its campaign activities, youth camps, and teaser campaigns at the schools, Association XY based in Sarajevo had developed a cadre of peer educators, some of whom were now training others. At the same time, XY staff noticed others had considerable talent in the arts. Why not capitalize on the creative pool, give added motivation to the more active members, and produce a promotional piece that could be used at scale?

So in early 2012, the Association XY team hand-picked 8 (initially 11) active youth, including one Roma teen, who had been regularly attending training events and organized for them multimedia creative workshops for making videos and short movies. The group learned how to use video equipment from a professional cameraman. They received training from a host of other professionals – a journalist, a radio broadcaster, a video director, and audio director.

The workshops were hands-on and involved the actual practice of making video documentaries and short movies. The crew had to learn to interview celebrities and youth, which they did over the six-month training period. During that time individual team members developed their talents in the direction of their preference, e.g., cameraman or journalist. The students had the privilege of working alongside well-known experts in their field, such as Zoran Catic, a journalist with a reputation for defending the rights of free speech, a youth worker and the director of a radio station. It was Catic who proposed to the group the idea of producing a radio show. When their first radio show went live on EFM radio (a popular student-operated radio station) in May 2012, the team was elated that more than half a million people had the chance to hear about the BMC movement in Sarajevo. This opened up the door for more radio and TV appearances for the BMK TV crew, as they came to be called, and Association XY to present BMC to the public.

At the end of the process, the young men produced their first BMK TV documentary. They also made several news reports and video reports about their different activities:

- What is a BMC and YMI? – a movie about YMI and BMC Sarajevo
- Girls against violence – video about girls' initiative in promoting gender equality and against violence
- Interview with the director of an orphanage
- Opening the BMC in “Orphan Center Bijelave” –a documentary about opening a new BMC for orphans
- One billion rising against the violence – in collaboration with the NGO Crvene, video about this activity
- Be a man, help the elderly – video report from the humanitarian action in a gerontology center

Many of the BMC activities that are being advertised by their multimedia projects are social actions not typical of things young teens do. They exemplify the sorts of activities being promoted as befitting of “a real man.” The 25 young men and women who visited the orphanage to make a video brought toys for the children, played with them, got some of them involved in a football match, and invited them to join a BMC. The video captures the experience of the young people who were not only there to interview the director for their documentary, but to interact with young children who have no parents and have adopted violence as a response to the problems in their lives. But they also saw what joy it brought to the small children to be playing with new toys. All the teens felt the urge to return to the orphanage and discover what else they could do with them.

Association XY and BMK TV then turned their attention to producing educational video movies. Several members of BMK TV joined the movie recording crew, others took on the role of developing the scenarios for the short movies and others were actors. A total of roughly 25 students have participated in the movie production process.

25 young men and women who visited the orphanage to make a video brought toys for the children, played with them...

In 2013 Association XY finalized a set of five movies on the topics of:

1. Violence
2. Peer pressure
3. Drugs and alcohol
4. Sexual and reproductive health
5. Association XY

Now, BMK TV is in the final throes of producing a movie about BMC and the benefits of being a member. It will be ready in time to present the film during the new school year for all students in project-related schools but also for students from other high schools in Sarajevo.

Association XY has a BMK Facebook page for the Sarajevo members. This site already has a large number of people who follow the page. Rather than develop a YouTube channel for BMK TV, the team decided that publishing the short movies on the Facebook page would have a broader reach, due to its high visibility and the reputation it has already. Thus, Facebook will serve as the main platform for distributing its promotional pieces.



BMK TV is in the final throes of producing a movie about BMC and the benefits of being a member.





BMK TV

Multimedia
workshops

**25 STUDENTS
PARTICIPATED
IN THE MOVIE**

KEY LESSONS

The collective experience of YMI, represented in the five examples, points to a few lessons in how best to use social media and the creative arts to reach youth, especially, with a social change message:

1. Ensure young men are involved from the design stage through to the final product
2. Keep up to date with where young men hang out and what appeals most to them
3. Make sure the message is readily available or accessible
4. Consider what innovative tool works best in each particular context
5. Allow youth the opportunity to experiment with different media and to go in the direction of their talents
6. Consult the online feedback (Facebook, blogs, Twitter) to know what appeals to youth
7. Engage celebrities to popularize the message



8. Recognize that social media spaces are an opportunity for youth to learn from each other and to offer up their perspective on current debates
9. Understand that social media offers youth a space where they seek validation and an audience with their peers. This can spur them on to develop their potential even further.

It is also highly evident in these case examples that youth are open to challenging the social norms and their own engrained beliefs. They young teens who participated in YMI have found a way to do this by acting collectively as part of a peer group (the BMC) and using entertainment or recreational activities to convey a bold, unconventional message, while demonstrating their talents.

END NOTES

1. They are: Status M (Zagreb), Center for Healthy Lifestyles E8 (Belgrade), Association for Sexual and Reproductive Health XY (Sarajevo) and Perpetuum Mobile: Center for Youth and Community Development (Banja Luka), Altruist (Mostar), Peer Educators Network (Pristina), Youth Educational Club and Center for Communities Development and Synergy (North Mitrovica).
 2. Promundo, Instituto PAPA!, Salud y Género and ECOS. 2013. Program H|M|D: A Toolkit for Action/ Engaging Youth to Achieve Gender Equity. Promundo: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Washington, DC, USA.
 3. Ibid.
 4. United Nations Population Fund and Youth Peer Education Network; and Family Health International/YouthNet. 2005. Theatre-based Techniques for Youth Peer Education: A Training Manual. Youth Peer Education Toolkit. New York: U.N. Population Fund.
 5. Everybody's Toolbox, a set of games for developing the discourse in a performance.
 6. See <http://www.bitef.rs/en/festival/festival.php>
 7. Boban Jevtić, Theatre Critic for NIN, Belgrade.
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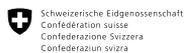
USING SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ARTS TO TRANSFORM GENDER NORMS:

CASE STUDY FROM THE
YOUNG MEN INITIATIVE

ORGANIZATIONS:



DONORS:



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