Introduction

The Solid Waste Management Unit was formally established within the Central Water & Sewerage Authority St.Vincent, in 1997 as part of the OECS Solid and Ship Generated Waste Management Project. At that time the waste collection system in the country, which was being managed by the Public Health Department in the Ministry of Health and the Environment was extremely inadequate and served less than half of the population.

In January 2001, the Solid Waste Management Unit assumed responsibility of this system and all of the inherent problems, which were many and varied. A programme of education and awareness was implemented at the same time that infrastructure was being 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.

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. Given this time frame, it was imperative that an imaginative approach be used (driving around the communities using a public address system to sensitise people) that allowed for the involvement of the entire team. The results of this effort were immediately seen, all of the targeted areas were informed, and the system was satisfactorily implemented within the prescribed time frame.

Subsequently, once the basic waste management system had been put in place, it was (and still is) constantly being revised and adjusted to meet needs as they emerged, and change practices that are not beneficial. This required and still requires, on going education and innovative initiatives to foster and sustain interest in the educational process.
Generally one of the most difficult tasks to accomplish is people's involvement in the change process. The field worker is constantly challenged to think of new ways to reach the target audience, and to encourage their active participation in the subject matter, 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. This type of approach while it gains results, only focuses on the academic development of the individual. By using cultural approaches a whole new world of creative learning is introduced that encourages active participation, stimulate creative thinking, which assists participants to retain the information learned.

In the case of the Solid Waste Management Unit of St Vincent, the Motorcade and Whistle Stops are part of our political culture and have seen active participation of the audience, while the 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**
- 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

1. **THE CULTURAL WAKE**

Given the fact that an effective waste management system was not previously established in St.Vincent & the Grenadines, one would agree that the concept of Solid Waste management is still relatively new to Vincentians. This means that every method possible must be utilised to ensure that the general public, receives the message that the process can only work if they become involved, and play their part to ensure the programme's success.

One such means of ensuring that the message is sent is through what is called a
cultural wake. As the name of this activity 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.

The Solid Waste Management Unit held Cultural Wakes in all of the communities on mainland St.Vincent, where dumps were being closed, namely Barrouallie, Georgetown and Arnos Vale.

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 DJ 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

2. THE MOTORCADE 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.

As was expected the situation to say the least, was 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. It was therefore decided that a mass education campaign was required immediately; to be followed of course by more intense individual and community programmes, to put a stop to the illegal dumping. Our response was to use 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
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
- Ministry of Tourism
- Public Health Department
- Media Houses

Format
The format varied for each of the motorcades 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, a community called Fitz Hughes. 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
- 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

3. 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)

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**

- 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, while at the same time allowing for information on solid waste management to reach the public. Most of the public education activities have had to be low cost due to budget constraint. Our community education programmes are instituted in such a way that the smallest child cannot only understand but participate. These approaches also 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 the active participation of the public. 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.

Appendix1

Tea Meeting Speech

What ah privilege and an honour to be able to speak to men and women from such illustrious backgrounds. To whom must I compare you? Must I compare you to Green Peace or is it peas who go around the world fighting the cause of the unfortunate by protecting the environment, NO!!! I will compare you with the great Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines whose sole aim is to ennoble the various civilisations of his people. As I look around the room, I could not help but feel awed that persons with your collective lineage are here to listen to one so humble as myself. Ladies and gentlemen must I continue or proceed? YES. Whether you want me to or not, I will continue because I believe that this business of educating the educator about solid waste management, is one that is of critical ambiguousness that I must indeed proceed.

Mr Chairman, Madam Secretary, and you environmentally minded followers. As I sat in yonder corner thinking about the task that is ahead to make you understand your roles and responsibilities in waste management, I felt that your collective degrees and maybe a doctorate or two would surely enhance my otherwise dim chances, of trying in my humble way to get you to use the 4Rs of waste management which are to Reduce, Reuse, Recover and Recycle. Even the kindergarteners are getting into the act. What of us adults, who stand to gain far more, from an over all environmental protection programme?

My fellow colleagues, ladies and gentlemen I must end at this point, for if I do not end I fear that in your eagerness to start practicing the 4Rs of waste management, you would be Rightoneously Reverberating, Ravenous Responses for institutionalisation. I thank you.