**St. Kitts Tourism Authority**

**Faces of Our Environment National Clean-up Campaign**

**March 2003 – May 2004**

Developing nations face many challenges, but environmental concerns are not often at the top of their governments’ agendas. So is the case in St. Kitts, a 68-square-mile island in the northeastern Caribbean, where trash is routinely thrown in ravines and onto the beach. Besides the obvious health and environmental hazards, St. Kitts’ economy was also suffering because tourists were beginning to view the island as unclean and, in their perception, unsafe. As a consultant with the St. Kitts Tourism Authority, I led the planning, development and implementation of a national clean-up campaign entitled “Faces of Our Environment.”

This public affairs campaign aimed to create a culture of environmental consciousness within the community and to change cultural attitudes about litter and littering. Our strategy involved two key components: public relations and public education. The public relations component included:

* writing and producing radio and television public service announcements (PSAs),
* encouraging local media outlets to run weekly columns about the clean-up, and
* creating media events and photo opportunities to constantly update the public.

The public education component involved:

* developing a simple curriculum for first through third grade students,
* inviting guest speakers into the classroom to discuss the importance of proper waste disposal, and
* filming a documentary to be aired on the local television station.

Each component required expert management so that the campaign’s key goals were communicated constantly and consistently. To achieve this, I developed and implemented a communications policy that each partner agency would abide by and an intricate media relations plan, organized by date and time in order to maximize the campaign’s exposure.

For this campaign, I led a communications team of three, training them to produce written materials such as feature articles, news releases, media advisories, and public service announcements. I also wrote and edited reports for the Prime Minister and his cabinet, and acted as an advisor to other senior government leaders concerning the direction of the campaign. In addition, as the public relations leader for the campaign, I arranged film crews, recorded video of several clean-up events, and wrote scripts for several PSAs. On several occasions, I acted as the spokesperson for the campaign.

Although we will not realize the effects of the public education campaign for years to come, we did manage to clean up 1,000 tons of garbage in less than nine months, thanks to a constant public affairs effort and the help of hundreds of volunteers.

# **Public Relations Plan**

**April, 2003**

***Situation Analysis:***

St. Kitts has reached a crisis point. If the island does not take steps to clean up solid waste, which litters villages, beaches and the railway tracks, the country will face major health, environmental and economic problems.

Recognizing this urgent need, the Ministry of Social Development, Community and Gender Affairs in partnership with the St. Kitts Tourism Authority and other tourism stakeholders has developed a comprehensive plan to clean up the island and maintain its cleanliness.

Several issues of concern were mentioned by the committee. They included:

1. Citizens might react badly if they perceive that they are just cleaning up their island for tourists and tourism. They need to know they are cleaning it up for their own future.
2. Generally, people on St. Kitts have a bad reaction to garbage. They don’t want to pick it up. They don’t want to have anything to do with it at all.
3. Generally, people on St. Kitts believe that if they stopped littering, the people who clean their litter up would lose their jobs.
4. Some businesses on the island dump their solid waste in inappropriate places because they don’t want to pay a hauler to dispose of it correctly.
5. Truckers are being paid to take Solid Waste to the SWMC at Conaree, however, in an effort to save time and cost, the garbage is dumped over the closest cliff side or in the cane fields.

The following public relations and public education plan addresses these concerns and incorporates the contributions of each committee member.

***Goals:***

1. To create a culture of environmental consciousness on St. Kitts.
2. To change cultural attitudes about litter and littering.

***Objectives:***

1. Educate Kittitians about the problems of littering, related to the economy, their health and the environment.
2. Inform Kittitians about proper ways to dispose of solid waste and hazardous waste (i.e. used motor oil, used car batteries, etc.)

***Tactics:***

PR Component:

1. Develop a Public Service Announcement (PSA) Campaign
   * Create and produce radio, TV, and print public service announcements to inform and educate
   * PSAs to be updated weekly announcing local clean-up sites/times
   * PSAs to be updated every month showing campaign progress
2. Encourage local media outlets to run weekly updates on progress of campaign.
3. Develop and write news releases and media advisories to continuously update local media.
4. Create media events and photo opportunities for the media on a weekly basis.
5. Arrange for interviews with key stakeholders and government officials throughout the campaign.
6. Create graphic representation of St. Kitts showing progress of campaign.
   * Map of St. Kitts with outline of railway highlighted in RED until it has been cleaned and is being maintained. Then it turns GREEN.

***Tactics, continued:***

Public Education Component:

1. Utilize SWMC’s student workbook to begin including environmental education in Grades 1-3.
2. Create and produce a unique educational video to be played frequently on ZIZ and in the classrooms of primary school children.

Topics addressed in the video would include:

## Environmental effects of solid waste

* + Health concerns resulting from improper solid waste disposal
  + Economic problems resulting from improper solid waste disposal
  + How to dispose of solid waste properly

1. Arrange for key stakeholders and government officials to conduct guest appearances in primary and high schools, as well as community events throughout the island on a monthly basis.

Topics could include:

* Solid Waste as a money-making enterprise
* How to stay sanitary, healthy
* How your solid waste affects our environment
* Recycling
* Properly disposing of hazardous waste

***Suggested Time Line:***

The Clean-Up Campaign:

Two weeks before Campaign Launch

* Get PR plan approved
* Produce PSAs
* Plan Campaign Launch media event including ministers of governement
* Meet with key stakeholders, government officials, media representatives to secure their support.

Week before Campaign Launch

* Release PSAs
* Arrange for media to be at launch

Monthly

* Update PSAs to show progress of campaign
* Arrange for public officials and key stakeholders to visit local schools and community groups, informing them of the urgency of this campaign and its progress.
* Provide detailed progress report to government officials and key stakeholders.

By August

* Begin promoting “Best Village” competition

### By September

* Launch PR support of Best Village competition (plan to be determined at a later date)
* Develop and produce educational video “The Faces of Our Environment”

#### Suggested Time Line, continued

Weekly Clean-Up Projects:

Two weeks before clean-up

* Coordinate with community groups to secure clean-up volunteers

Week before clean-up

* Secure media stories about upcoming clean-up site
  1. What will be accomplished
  2. What resources are needed
  3. Invitation to the Community Pot-Luck lunch on Saturday
     + Update PSA with pertinent clean-up site information
       1. When
       2. Where
       3. Contact Person

Weekend of clean-up

* + - * + Develop photo opportunity for press

Volunteers cleaning up

Community Pot-Luck for lunch

Local politician

Week after clean-up

Develop and pitch media stories about progress of campaign

Show pictures of clean-up and the volunteers

Arrange interviews with volunteers, leaders of the community that was just cleaned

Weekend after clean-up

* Develop photo opportunity for press
* Volunteers beautifying the land they cleaned the weekend before.

*Contact:*

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**THE FACES OF OUR ENVIRONMENT CAMPAIGN**

**Clean, Beautify, Maintain**

**BASSETERRE, St. Kitts (7 May 2003) –** The faces of the environment on St. Kitts are dramatic and beautiful. From lush green cane fields and deep, mysterious ghauts to monumental heights and elegant natural beaches, St. Kitts has benefited from all Mother Nature has to offer.

The government of St. Kitts, in a joint effort with many private sector partners, has developed a comprehensive environmental initiative to clean, beautify and maintain the beautiful landscape of the island. This initiative is called Faces of Our Environment, and it is a major part of the national “Country Above Self” program.

### The Campaign

In the past, several ministries of government have embarked on clean-up and maintenance programs. Faces of Our Environment will combine all of those programs together, at the same time pooling their resources – all to make St. Kitts a better place to live.

St. Kitts has a litter problem. Garbage is scattered around the countryside in ghauts. It is entangled in seaweed on the beaches. It occupies space in derelict buildings throughout villages and in Basseterre. And it encircles the island, next to the sugar train tracks.

To combat each of these areas of concern, Faces of Our Environment has identified five key phases of clean-up. They are as follows:

Phase I – Clean-up of villages, backways, and railroad tracks

Phase II – Clean-up of Island Beaches

Phase III – Clean-up of Island Ghauts

Phase IV – Clean-up of Derelict Buildings

Phase V – Clean-up of Basseterre

Each of the phases has three direct components: clean-up, beautification and maintenance. Community leaders and volunteers will manage these components. The community groups will partner with public and private sector businesses that will provide equipment and additional human resources to ensure the success of the campaign.

(more)

## FACES OF OUR ENVIRONMENT/Add One

As a component of all phases, Faces of Our Environment will conduct an all-encompassing public education program. Elements of which will be included in primary and high school classrooms, businesses, youth groups, various associations and in the mass media.

Faces of Our Environment is not simply cleaning up the island and maintaining its beauty. The program is charged with make a fundamental change in the public’s attitude towards litter.

### The Harmful Effects Of Litter

When not disposed of properly, waste has the potential to negatively impact several important parts of society on St. Kitts.

Unsanitary conditions that exist in many villages due to garbage contribute greatly to health problems, especially in children and elderly patients. Too often children play near unofficial dumpsites and are subjected to diseases and infections that they should not be.

When waste is not taken care of in a controlled way it can also adversely affect the environment. Used car batteries, for instance, will contaminate soil, thereby contaminating the ground water supply. Used motor oil has a similar effect, when improperly disposed of.

Eventually waste will have a dramatic impact on the economy of St. Kitts. More than a quarter of St. Kitts’ gross domestic product comes from the tourism industry. The more litter and waste, the fewer tourists who come to St. Kitts. The fewer tourists coming to St. Kitts, the less money put into the local economy. Less money means fewer jobs. The cycle continues.

### Call to Action

Faces of Our Environment seeks to stop these ill-effects before they begin to take hold of the country, by providing an organized system by which communities can clean, beautify and maintain their important part of St. Kitts.

Faces of Our Environment depends on volunteers in order to be successful. Individuals who are interested in volunteering their time and resources to the Faces of Our Environment campaign should contact Chris Turnbull at 465-4040.

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*Faces of Our Environment* is a major collaborative initiative under the national “Country Above Self” program approved by Cabinet. The *Faces of Our Environment* Campaign is a unique joint effort between the Ministries of Agriculture, Community Affairs, Culture, Education, Environment, Tourism, Health, Public Works, Youth, the St. Kitts Solid Waste Management Corporation, the St. Kitts Tourism Authority, and the St. Kitts Scenic Railway to clean, beautify and maintain the natural landscape of St. Kitts. *Faces of Our Environment* will focus on several key clean-up projects throughout the country.