Insights from an innovative, health promotion project to reduce alcohol consumption in young African-Australian men

Presenter:
Emma Saleeba
Manager, Alcohol and Tobacco, VicHealth

VicHealth Action Agenda

Our ambition is for one million more Victorians to have better health and wellbeing by 2023.

- Promote healthy eating
- Encourage regular physical activity
- Prevent tobacco use
- Prevent harm from alcohol
- Promote mental wellbeing
VicHealth’s Innovation Challenge - Alcohol

We wanted ideas that aimed to:
- Reduce the amount Victorians drink, particularly those who drink a lot, often
- Increase the acceptability of saying no to a drink, or drinking a bit less.

Be A Brother

Project team: cohealth, filmmaker Ezeldin Deng, Youth Support and Advocacy Service, Victoria University

Proposal: #BeaBrother - a social marketing campaign and initiative that supports young African men to become role models called "Brothers", who support one another to drink less.

Strengths of the Be a Brother pitch:
- A creative approach
- Co-design (developed by the community, for the community)
- Building on existing skills and talent of the young African Australian community, and within cohealth arts generator
Background

Identified need in the community:

• Cohort of heavy drinkers (South Sudanese young men aged 18 - 30 years)
• Heavy burden of troubled pasts, civil war in Sudan
• High levels of dislocation from their families and communities
• Sense of belonging (critical to social connection) is severely lacking
• Experience of media representation is largely negative


Project Aim:
Be a Brother aimed to make it socially acceptable amongst young African men aged 16-25 in Melbourne’s western region to drink moderately. The project encouraged young men to ‘be a brother’ by supporting their friends to drink less.

Method / Approach

African young men find belonging in drinking with their “brothers”

Define a good “brother” as somebody who encourages their friends to drink less

Use men from these groups (peer leaders) to create and share social media promoting this message

Recruit young African men to register (online via beabrother.net) as brothers

Some registered brothers and their brothers (peers) have reduced heavy drinking

Peer leaders help registered brothers to reduce their heavy drinking

Peer leaders support registered brothers via online platforms (Facebook, Instagram, email & SMS). Referring to services where appropriate

VicHealth
Social media campaign

VicHealth

ALCOHOL WON'T TAKE AWAY THE PAIN

DRINK LESS HAVE FUN

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION
Project Reach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Active participants n=245</th>
<th>Involved Participants n=99</th>
<th>Audience n=3,350</th>
<th>Registered Brothers n=100</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>16-18 years</td>
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<td>20-30 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 30 years</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Background</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>South Sudanese</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burundian</td>
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<tr>
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<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-African</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<td>83%</td>
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Project Evaluation

• Western-style quantitative data collection through administering scaled tools with individual participants was not culturally appropriate. ‘Yarning’ method employed. (Bessarab & Ng’andu 2010; Geia, Hayes & Usher 2013)

• Qualitative data from staff and project participants was gathered via:
  - semi-structured interviews with project staff and film-maker (each 1 to 1.5 hours), and
  - focus groups with brothers including mentors (2 x approx. 1 hour each, one a month after the start of the social media campaign, one a month after its completion, plus groups for film development)

• Data from interviews and focus groups were analysed descriptively via content/ theme analysis

Key Findings

• Over 100 young African men signed up

• Participants spoke of their and/or others’ reduction in alcohol consumption as a result of the project.

• Change in these young men’s beliefs about themselves and their ability to create change in this area (i.e. their relationship with alcohol).

• Movement towards a new discourse around alcohol in this community, a ‘collective self-esteem’ and the creation of a culture of support for change
Quotes from participants

“When I receive it [a SMS] it’s the reason why I go out and I don’t drink, or go out and drink less, or go out and feel very proud as a brother”

“To me it’s supportive, like having a big brother telling you you’re messing up, telling you to think twice. The part of support that I like, someone is willing to give you their time to try to help you to make a better choice.”

Acknowledgements

• Ezeldin Deng, Film-maker
• Liss Gabb, cohealth
• Associate Professor Craig Fry, Victoria University
• Dr Caroline Clark, Victoria University
Find out more:

http://beabrother.net/about/
(you can watch the three films and music video)

Look up Be a Brother on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram