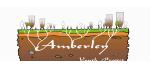
'What about the boy?'

Project evaluation

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An evaluation of Race on the Agenda's 'What about the Boy?' awareness raising pilot project

Contents	Page
Acknowledgments	2
1. Introduction	3
1.1 Purpose of pilot project	3
1.2 Background	3
1.3 Evaluation aims	4
2. The work done and how it was evaluated	5
2.1 How many training sessions, how many participants?	5
2.2 Resources and techniques used in the training sessions	5
2.3 Evaluation design and interviews	6
2.3.1 Peer Educators/Learning Group	7
2.3.2 Professionals	7
2.4 Limitations of the evaluation	7
3. Evaluation Findings and Recommendations	9
3.1 Overview	9
3.2 Main successes of the project	9
3.2.1 What the boys and young men thought	9
3.2.1.1 What the boys and young men took away from the project	10
3.2.2 What the professionals thought	11
3.3 Aspects to work on	12
3.3.1 Structure of the project	12
3.3.2 Engagement of boys and young men in the project	13
3.3.2.1 Motivation	14
3.3.3 Context and environment	15
3.3.4 Roles and responsibilities	16
3.3.5 Development – widening the impact	17
4. Conclusion	19
5. References	20

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of pilot project

The initial purpose of this project was to address sexual exploitation and gender-based violence within a gang and serious youth violence context by exploring what effective long term preventative work with young men would look like and piloting aspects of such work. After considering the funding and the best use of resources, it was decided that the objectives of the *What About the Boy* pilot project (WAB) should be to raise awareness by training a group of young men as peer educators in their local context. Combining a variety of skills and experience, Race on the Agenda (ROTA) worked in partnership with Working with Men (WWM), the Amberley Youth Project and specialist training consultants to deliver the project objectives as follows:

- Engage young men in exploring, identifying and understanding their role in addressing sexual exploitation and gender-based violence within gang and serious youth violence contexts (through training and support).
- Support young men to convey these messages to their younger male peers raising awareness about the issues in question and challenging stereotypes of masculinity and gender relations (through peer education and social media).
- Identify the means by which harmful attitudes amongst young men could be addressed by working alongside young men who have grown up in harmful and gang-affected environments (through training and support, peer education, social media and analysis).
- Raise awareness through the engagement of young men in understanding the root causes of violence against women and girls and galvanising them to campaign against this issue (through training and support, peer education, social media and analysis).
- Disseminate project findings so that learning about preventative approaches influences policy and practice on a wider basis (analysis, social media and roundtable event).

1.2 Background

In recent years there has been a growing awareness of the need for specialist and long-term preventative work with young men at risk of gang-association (End Violence Against Women, 2011; Female Voice in Violence, 2011; Beckett, H et al. 2013). The idea behind WAB was developed from recommendations made in ROTA's Female Voice in Violence project (FVV) in 2011, which explored the impacts of gang association on girls and young

women. The report found that many of the policies and services that focused on gangs and serious youth violence (SYV) failed to tackle young men's harmful attitudes and behaviours towards women and girls. However in a broader context of work with young men to reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG), organisations and campaigns such as Respect, Working with Men, White Ribbon and the This is Abuse campaign are all leading the way to shift national policy on the issue. More recently, research on child sexual exploitation (CSE) has further identified the need for working with young men to challenge harmful attitudes towards women and girls, and to identify young men's own experiences of victimisation which are often hidden due to stereotyped applications of gender (Cockbain et al. 2014).

There has been relatively little academic evaluation of the most effective primary strategies for preventing sexual violence (DeGue, S. et al. 2014), however peer education has been found to be a useful way of engaging with young people on a variety of health related issues (Mason, H. 2003). Independently all partners in this project have a vast amount of experience in engaging and involving young people from different backgrounds and have successfully delivered training and mentoring projects with young people in a variety of settings.

1.3 Evaluation aims

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- Assess the successes of the pilot project
- Make recommendations about the necessary adaptations
- Make recommendations about the likelihood for project expansion and/or replication.

Therefore this evaluation purports to discuss the above points based on the qualitative findings.

2. The work done and how it was evaluated

2.1 How many training sessions, how many participants?

All activity took place at the Amberley Youth Centre in the borough of Westminster.

- Four training sessions were run by external trainers and facilitated by the youth worker discussing sexual exploitation, gender-based violence and bullying.
- Between six and 16 young men attended the training sessions (these numbers fluctuated throughout the project).
- There were two additional feedback sessions on presentation skills to ensure the peer educators were ready to present. This was followed by five additional sessions with the youth worker to focus on presentation and content.
- Seven of the young men became peer educators.
- In small groups the peer educators presented to groups of eight 12 other young men, hereafter known as the learning group.
- Two evaluation sessions with an external trainer took place at the end.
- At the end of the project a group discussion took place at a residential exploring key messages from the project.

2.2 Resources and techniques used in the training sessions and presentations

The external trainers used a variety of different methods during the training including audio-visual content, PowerPoint presentations, discussion and fact sharing. Some of the young men commented that they would have liked the training sessions to have been more dynamic, this was addressed by bringing in a ball to stimulate discussion and increase the pace of the sessions. It was noted, however, that due to time constraints it was not possible to carry out a training needs analysis which could have addressed some of these issues. Please see below for the full recommendation.

The young men used PowerPoint presentations and interactive games such as tug of war to stimulate the learning group.

2.3 Evaluation design and interviews

This evaluation has aimed to loosely follow principles of a Realist evaluation, which seeks to explore "What works for whom and in what circumstances?" as opposed to simply asking whether the project has 'worked'. (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) This approach places strong emphasis on the context in which the project was carried out in order to identify how successful the project was for the people in that environment. As the project was designed to work with young men in a particular context and to shape the views of their peers within that environment, the nature of the environment as well as the content of the delivery are of importance to this evaluation. Therefore we felt that a Realist evaluation perspective would be a helpful way of assessing the feasibility of project expansion and/or replication and the context in which this would work best.

Primarily qualitative data was gathered in order to evaluate the impact of WAB project from the perspective of the participants and presenters, and to provide recommendations to ROTA and potential future funders about the possibility of project replication. As such, the data collected from interviews with the following project participants forms the basis of this report:

- Nineof the young men who participated as either peer educators or learners: five peer educators, three members of the learning group and a young man who acted as cameraman for the short film that was produced.
- The external trainers; Carlene Firmin and Dorett Jones who ran the majority of the sessions on VAWG, CSE and bullying; Ikamara Larasi and Lia Latchford who ran a session on media misrepresentation; and Joseph Amuah from the Gangs Unit Westminster City Council who ran a session on sexual exploitation.
- Julie-Ann Gayle, a youth worker and the service development manager at the Amberley Youth Centre, who facilitated the majority of the sessions.
- Sheena Campbell, project intern at ROTA, who attended the majority of the sessions and created transcripts of the sessions.

Transcripts of the sessions provided contextual information and gave some indication of the structure and climate of these sessions. To our knowledge the WAB pilot project is one of very few projects around the UK that works with young men to train them as peer educators in order to raise their awareness of issues such as gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. As the project was designed to be beneficial to the young men who directly participated and their wider peers in terms of raising awareness, we felt it was

crucial for their feedback to be central to this evaluation. Whilst there were some difficulties with this (please see limitations section below), we have tried to prioritise their reflections on the project in this report.

On completion of the project, the young men participated in an evaluation with one of the external trainers that focussed on their individual learning about the issues addressed during the project. Our evaluation, therefore, was designed with more of a focus on the overall successes of the project in terms of expectations, structure, timing, learning and outcomes from the points of view of all the participants. This included an assessment of which aspects would need to be developed and/or changed in order to successfully roll out the project elsewhere.

2.3.1 Peer Educators/Learning Group

The interview questions for the young men focused on their experience of the project as a whole, asking them to consider successes and areas for improvement and to rate how much they felt they had learnt. As there was no baseline data we relied on the young men's self-reported change in awareness to assess to what degree their awareness had been raised. To measure this we asked the young men to rate from one (low) to 10 (high) their knowledge of the subject matter before and after the project as this was an easy way of assessing this self-reported change. The interviews particularly attempted to elicit the young men's views on successful ways of engaging their peers and how the learning from the project could be disseminated in and out of the youth centre.

2.3.2 Professionals

The interview questions for the professionals involved with the project focused on whether they felt the project objectives had been met; what the main challenges of working with young men in this way were; and what could be improved in terms of the structure and management of the project.

2.4 Limitations of the evaluation

There are a number of ways in which this evaluation was limited in its scope:

 Firstly, the evaluation took place four months after completion of the project, meaning that although this may highlight retention of learning, at the same time the quality of the data gathered from interviews could potentially be affected by the time lapse. Many of the young men commented that it was hard to recall specific aspects of the project. Furthermore, we were not able to interview all the young men who participated in the project. This was in part due to the short time frame of the evaluation and the length of time after the project ended, meaning some of the young men were no longer often at the Amberley Youth Centre and different priorities and commitments meant they were not available to give feedback.

- Secondly, as we were not present at the various stages of the pilot project, the data available for us to evaluate was limited. In addition to this, whilst the transcripts provided some context to the sessions, there were some inconsistencies and gaps in the data recorded which affected how useful they were. In light of the above we have relied almost solely on the reflections of the trainers and participants post-project to guide our evaluation. Therefore, in evaluating how effective the project was as an awareness raising initiative we have had to rely on a self-reported change in awareness from the young men as there was no baseline data, as mentioned above.
- Finally, this was not the only evaluation that was carried out. As mentioned above; an evaluation took place with the young men on completion of the project by an external trainer; there was informal evaluation work carried out by the youth worker; and case studies made of some of the young men's reflections of the project. The young men gave their full informed consent to take part in the project, of which this evaluation was a part, and in addition were offered a financial incentive to take part in an interview for this evaluation. Whilst we recognise and appreciate the contribution the young men made to this evaluation and the project itself, there is the potential that this, coupled with the amount of relatively uncoordinated evaluation processes, may have had an impact on the quality of the feedback. This is because the young men may have felt an obligation to answer in a certain way in order to receive the financial incentive, and may have become frustrated and/or confused by the various different evaluations which may have led to inconsistent answers.

3. Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

3.1 Overview

Overall the project contained many successful elements and was mainly an enjoyable experience for both the young men and the professionals involved. The young men commented that they felt it was an important project to participate in and valued the information and skills they had learned from the project.

"We never knew nothing about the stuff, but it benefitted us... Around the area not everyone knows a lot of stuff, we just hear a bit of stuff from here and there but it gave everyone insight so we know about each topic." (Peer Educator, 18 years old)

Generally the external trainers found the young men to be highly receptive, engaged, inquisitive and interested in the project.

"I was struck by how much they applied themselves, and what it took for them to be there and turn up to the sessions. And be that young and engage with the subject matter, I was impressed." (External Trainer)

All participants spoke enthusiastically about the value of projects such as this one, albeit with some changes, and stressed the need for more time and more funding to be able to continue work in this area.

"I think it is a valuable project to be involved in because you get to learn about issues you don't in school...because it [abuse and sexual assault] happens everyday" (Peer Educator, 15 years old)

"I think it's a really good idea and definitely the kind of work that should be funded, but funded sufficiently and with enough time allocated to doing the learning." (External Trainer)

3.2 Main successes of the project

3.2.1 What the boys and young men thought

Overall, the young men who participated responded very well to the project. When asked what they enjoyed about the project, the statistics and the visual material used by the trainers appeared to be the most engaging aspects. They also appreciated having a space in which to have discussions about the issues raised and share opinions with their peers.

3.2.1.1 What the boys and young men took away from the project

Awareness

The young men felt that their level of awareness of the topics covered was heightened.

"It's a good project, good for awareness" (Learning group, 13 years old)

When asked to rate from one (low) to 10 (high) their level of awareness of CSE before and after the project, all the BYM said it had increased or even doubled.

Skills and confidence

The young men mentioned that they had become more confident to start conversations, speak out and present on issues around bullying and attitudes towards girls and young women.

"I wasn't keen at first, but after a few sessions, I got into it" (Peer Educator, 18 years old).

"I liked the debates/talking" (Peer Educator, 16 years old)

One young man, said the project helped contribute to his qualifications and CV.

"I got involved because I'm into filming, so I can put it on my CV and help with career building" (Young man filming, 16 years old)

Change in outlook

When asked if their outlooks on the issues had changed, all the young men had said that it had.

"I'm still learning about it now, reading about it on the internet" (Peer Educator, 18 years old)

"Help people open their eyes and see what's going on...we focus on bigger things and not small things which can have the biggest effect in life" (Peer Educator, 18 years old)

It was evident that some reflection had taken place, however although most of the young men claimed that their outlook had changed, this was not always reflected in what they said. For example, it was clear that challenging attitudes towards girls and young women, especially around responsibility and the reasons why gender-based violence is unacceptable, needed extra work.

"It made me think hard because now I have a little sister and I don't want that for her...When she's older she needs to be more careful...You can't mess with girls as they will have brothers" (Learning group, 13 years old)

Learning around the law and statistics

When speaking with the young men, it was evident that the training around the current statistics and law had a big impact on them.

"Learnt a lot of things, the statistics which were quite shocking!" (Learning Group, 14 years old)

The young men mentioned that they had previously been unaware of the laws surrounding certain offences, such as 'sexting', cyberbullying, social media and sex trafficking.

3.2.2 What the professionals thought

Engagement of the young men and awareness raising

The professionals were impressed that some of the young men were very committed and willing to give up their time voluntarily after school and during school holidays to take part in the project. This small group of engaged boys reacted positively to the learning, learned some facts and were able to apply the knowledge and develop it during their presentations to their peers.

"A small cohort understood what exploitation is and could communicate it themselves...they developed an understanding of bullying, power and control, how the exploiters could be exploited. They took what we gave them and did something with that themselves." (External Trainer)

The content that dealt specifically with their experiences, such as the session on media representation, was well received because the boys were able to relate more easily. They seemed pleased to be discussing issues such as how young black men are portrayed in the media, as these are issues seldom talked about. They also appeared interested in the subject matter:

"It's the now, that's what makes it interesting and important. They all have sisters, and mothers and girlfriends" (Youth Worker)

However, it's important to point out that this quote is somewhat problematic as it reinforces the idea that issues matter based on whether the young men have women connected to them. It highlights the need for more training of the youth workers involved

to ensure the message from professionals is consistent and in line with the aims of the training.

Project environment

The setting of the training worked very well. In a project like this the trainers felt it was important to work with young men 'on their patch' as it allowed them to be more relaxed and made the process more natural and more genuine. It was clear that the youth centre was a safe space and this facilitated the engagement process.

"They are navigating those spaces and know what is required and have experience of navigating those spaces." (External Trainer)

The peer education element was felt to be successful, as being challenged by their peers made the boys more receptive to the messages.

"I think the concept of working with a group of young men, accessed through a youth centre is an excellent idea in terms of peer education because they are already in a particular environment where you can take steps to control the learning that goes on afterwards...to generate a youth club where staff and older and younger people have been through the same process." (External Trainer)

This was supported by comments from the young men who stated that these kind of conversations are "easier to have with people your age". (Peer Educator, 16 years old)

Professionals' involvement

Having a youth worker who knows the boys and has built relationships based on respect present at the training was very helpful. This meant there were already established boundaries and a respect that spread to the external trainers.

The professionals also remarked that it worked well having a number of external trainers coming in as this provided more interest and variation in the project.

3.3 Aspects to work on

3.3.1 Structure of the project

A solid project structure is vital to effectively meet the project objectives and to ensure better use of the budget. There were some concerns that aspects of the structure of WAB were not in place, specifically the 'pre work' to establish the young men's levels of awareness and their individual learning needs. This planning is also essential in order to

set the context for the learning to take place; to deal with expectations; and to discuss the subjects covered in a safe and controlled way to minimise the potential harm caused by discussion of issues that could potentially trigger feelings as a result of past/present experiences.

"There was no time to do any analysis around their own belief systems around the subject matter." (External Trainer)

RECOMMENDATIONS - We would recommend the following stages based on evidence gathered from participants and trainers (see figure 1.)

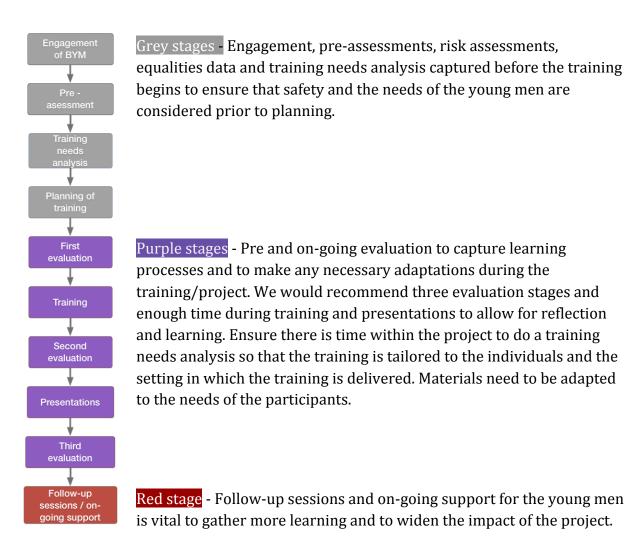


Figure 1. Recommended structure for future projects based on evidence gathered

3.3.2 Engagement of boys and young men in the project

There were some concerns raised by professionals around why and how the young men became involved in the project. It appears the young men were told about the project by their youth worker and when questioned about their expectations of the project some expressed that they had been unsure about what the project would entail before starting the training. Initially there appeared to be a lack of awareness about the project.

"More awareness around these kinds of projects, I didn't know about this one till I was told" (Peer Educator, 18 years old)

It was also mentioned that the project had been stressful for some participants towards the end, with the young men working hard to finalise their presentations. Most rose to the challenge, but there was a suggestion that a 'ready pack' or a 'handbook' with more information about what the young men were expected to produce and support with this would have been valuable.

"A worthwhile project... to improve on it there needs to be a lot more structure...so they [the young men] know exactly what you want them to deliver" (Youth Worker)

★ RECOMMENDATIONS:

- There is a need for a distinct and well planned pre-engagement process where clear guidance is given to both the youth worker and the young men about the expectations of the project and what the work entails.
- There is a need for further information for young people relating to the subject matter to supplement their learning, in addition to the training.

3.3.2.1 Motivation

Whilst acknowledging that some kind of reward or benefit beyond the learning from the project is necessary to motivate the young men to take part and remain engaged, it was not felt that the promise of a residential was the right way to achieve this. Some professionals felt that the desire to take part in the residential was the main reason some of the young men got involved in the project and that for a peer education project to be successful it is important that the young men are genuinely interested in the issues.

★ RECOMMENDATION: Residential could take place at the start with young men who have been through a thorough assessment process to gauge their suitability for the project. The project could be followed up by a roundtable with policy makers

and/or prominent figures in the local authority to give the young men a chance to feedback on their thoughts following involvement in the project.

3.3.3 Context and environment

As noted in section 3.3.1, there were concerns about the lack of established context for the project, which compromised the learning process and raised concerns about the ability of the peer educators to be able to challenge their peers on these issues. Professionals agreed that there was not enough time allocated for true reflection of the issues discussed.

"It's counter-productive to send people out to do peer education work if they haven't been given enough time to do the learning or been given the time and space to reflect on what they've been hearing." (External Trainer)

★ RECOMMENDATION: Project needs to be delivered over a longer period of time, with follow up sessions embedded into every training session to allow the young men to reflect on their learning and development. The young men need the time and support to develop the confidence to challenge the potentially harmful attitudes of their peers when presenting.

Professionals felt that it would have been very useful to develop their own knowledge of the area in which the project took place in order to make the content of the sessions more relatable for the young men. Although the subject matter would stay the same, relating the facts and figures to the area to help the young men analyse and process the information they receive would be very beneficial. As mentioned above, it was the sessions that touched on issues that directly affected the young men that they found the most stimulating.

"There's a comfortability that comes with discussing actions that directly impact you as a subject, like racism for example." (External Trainer)

"Also, being able to empathise is a factor...I think the media representation session and the gangs unit session would be relatable...easier to engage with because it can come from experience." (External Trainer)

The project was also somewhat isolated in its setting and also therefore in its reach. This was due in part to it being a pilot project, but it was felt that more could have been made of links to other local services to root the project and the knowledge gained in the community and to strengthen the impact of the project.

★ RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Allow time for professionals to develop knowledge of the area. This would enable trainers to make the content of the sessions more relatable for the young men and therefore have more of an impact.
- Make links with other similar projects in the local area to see if some of this learning can feed in to strengthen the impact in the youth centre and wider community. The boys and young men could meet with services such as children's social care, the housing association and the neighbourhood police to facilitate a meaningful local policy initiative about what it is like to be a young man in their area. This could involve more presentations, the rolling out of the peer education project and the creation of resources to be disseminated.

3.3.4 Roles and Responsibilities

The young men welcomed the expertise of the trainers and commented that it was a positive experience being taught by professionals external to the youth club who had extensive subject knowledge and a wide range of training experience. The external trainers were however largely female and it may have had a greater impact on the young men to have had both male and female trainers present during every training session for a project like this. Particularly when addressing gender-based violence, and challenging potentially harmful attitudes towards women and girls, it is important that the message comes from both genders.

"People feel more comfortable talking to people their age, their gender" (Peer Educator, 16 years old)

In addition to this, all professionals spoke of a need for a professional with specialist knowledge on these issues to be present throughout the project to provide support on these issues and continuity in the learning. It was also felt that the youth worker should be given extra training in order to support the young men learning about these issues and integrate the learning from the project into the youth club.

"I think having either one or two people (not the YW) but from the training programme that is a thread throughout the project is necessary. Because it fosters the engagement, and it creates a level of trust around the training experience." (External Trainer)

★ RECOMMENDATIONS:

- There should be both male and female trainers present at every session that have an intersectional analysis on gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and bullying.
- A specialist should be present throughout all the training to draw links and to ensure there is a safeguarding pathway in case of disclosures. As mentioned above pre-assessments, pre-training and planning would lower the risk of unsafe disclosures.
- Youth workers need pre-training on the issues to be able to answer questions from young men and to understand the subject matter in depth.

3.3.5 Development - widening the impact

All participants agreed that the project could and should be replicated and that this would be possible in a variety of settings. It should only be replicated however, if the recommendations in this report are carried out. A pre-assessment process, on-going support and time for development and reflection during the project are crucial to give the project the means to have a positive and meaningful impact.

"It has the potential to be a very effective and valuable project, definitely. But I also think that in order to do that you have to give people the room to go through the learning." (External Trainer)

Other potential project settings identified by the participants included schools, with many young men commenting that they thought the issues raised during the project should definitely be covered at school. A couple of the young men commented that they had used the learning to contribute to PSHE lessons at school and that they received good feedback from this.

"Now we can talk about it, nothing childish about it." (Peer Educator, 18 years old)

It was felt strongly by the young men and the professionals that the learning to come out of the project should be shared. One of the ways this could be done is through influencing policy.

★ RECOMMENDATIONS:

 The learning from the project should be taken to policy makers by the young men and should contribute to policy consultations. Links with other local services as mentioned above could facilitate this.

- A project like this should not occur in an ad hoc fashion, but should be sustained and continuous. There is a need for a follow up with the young men within the first 2 months after completion of the project and continued engagement and support with the issues raised to provide a more meaningful impact.
- The possibility of rolling out the project in the youth club and other settings should be explored.

4. Conclusion

The pilot project achieved the main objectives and overall was successful at raising awareness of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence within a gang and SYV context. A group of seven young men were trained as peer educators, who presented to at least another eight young men. Additionally they have created a short film on what they learnt to show to other young people. This evaluation demonstrates that training young men as peer educators on those issues was an effective way to raise awareness and engage young men. The peer education model is an extremely resourceful way to deliver the work, however more funding needs to be dedicated to sustain the work and train more young men. If this project were to be replicated, which we strongly think it should be, there is a need for a clearer and more comprehensive planning phase and more meaningful incentives in the form of engagement with policy and/or other similar projects and organisations in the same context.

Professionals, including trainers, project leaders and youth workers, need adequate support and specialist training in order to continue to develop and deliver projects such as WAB. To ensure that these projects have the desired and necessary impact - to tackle sexual exploitation and gender-based violence within a gang and SYV context - it is imperative that this kind of work is not done in isolation. There is a real need for long-term preventative and awareness raising work and wider societal initiatives to tackle harmful attitudes and VAWG. A rolling out of a sufficiently funded and well-planned project like WAB could make a very meaningful contribution to this campaign.

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