



# "My Island Through My Eyes" Final Report

**Title:** "My Island Through My Eyes"

**Lead and Partner Organizations:** Hagley Gap Youth Community and The Blue Mountain Project

## **Project Coordinator:**

Hi, My name is Kelly Lynch. I am an artist, teacher and lifelong learner. I believe in the power of art and how art education can empower children of all ages. I have been traveling to the community of Hagley Gap for three years as a volunteer for the Blue Mountain Project. After my first visit I knew that the people of this community were going to be apart of my life forever. While studying for my Masters Degree at Lesley University I came across the method Photovoice. After researching and studying this process I developed the passion and vision to bring photovoice to the children of Hagley Gap. Thanks to Youth Visioning my vision came true.

## **Youth Leaders:**

My name is Kevin Maul Williams. I am 24 years old. I went to Minto All-Age School. For work I run a guesthouse and farm. I live in Hagley Gap, St Thomas. People call me Tunky.

My name is Andrea Edwards, I live at Minto, in the Parish of St. Thomas. I have two son, Ronald who is 7 and T.J. 3 year. I have two sister and five brothers. I went to Mavis Bank High School where I pursued a career in business education. My hobbies are playing netball, watching television and visiting friends. My ambition is to become a nurse or a bank clerk.

My name is Leslie Spaulding. (a.k.a Shaki) I went to Minto All-Age School. I live at Hagley Gap, P.O. St. Thomas. I am a carpenter and run a shop in Gap Square.

My name is Kemarley Walker or Corey. I am 23 years old. I am a farmer and live at Hagley Gap, P.O. St. Thomas.

## Youth Participants:

*(Listed below are the youths names who gave 100% involvement from beginning to end, others came and helped but were not always reliable.)*

Dwayne Wright

Myles Walker

Aneka Edwards

Duwanje Wright

Chinell McDonald

Daneil McDonald

Mark Roberts

Ashley Anchor

Shameika Richards

Sashana McPherson

## Summary of Project: (By: Kelly Lynch)

While walking through the mountains, or visiting the local shop in the community of Hagley Gap anyone can hear the sounds of reggae music and singing from the local people. On the weekends whether you are at home or in church the sounds of people singing and celebrating their faith echoes through the community. The houses are painted in bright tropical colors and the shops are painted with unique cultural images or paintings created with natural creativity. It's clear the people in this community are artists but their talents are not able to grow or be nourished because the resources are not provided in the local schools. Whether in school or just hanging around the mountains the children are not given the chance to speak about their personal experiences living there.

Over the past 3 years I have traveled to the community of Hagley Gap, Jamaica five times as a volunteer with a non-profit organization called the Blue Mountain Project. While living and working in this community, I realized I had no idea what it was like to live with no running water, little transportation and in a home with more than four people. I have worked with the children on reading, writing, painting, drawing and cleaning the environment, but I had never asked them questions about what they think of their community, what their dreams are or what is important to them as children living in the mountains of Jamaica. After researching and reading about photovoice and the many different projects people have done using this method I became inspired to bring photovoice and the art of photography to children of Hagley Gap.

Photovoice projects have been done all over the world, from the villages of rural China to neighborhoods in the United States. Photovoice projects have covered many themes such as safety on school grounds, children dealing with violence in communities, and women's health issues. The photographs that are produced through photovoice projects document actual realities that people see and deal with on a daily basis.

This photovoice project took place over a two-month period. After a series of workshops on how to use the camera, photography techniques and group discussions on community issues, the children were given digital cameras and asked to take pictures of what they love about their community and what they dislike about their community. As a group they also decided to take pictures of the places they felt safe and unsafe in their community. The children who participated in " My Island Through My Eyes" created photographs that represent the true and natural beauty, character, personality and unique attributes that best represent life on their island.

**Activities:**

1. Youth Leader Meetings (July 2007)

- a.) During these activities, several meetings took place. The meetings took place discussing youth leaders role in this project, our goals, explanations of what was expect and what photovoice, photography, art, leadership, role models, and purpose of this project were.
- b.) These meetings took place in Kingston, Leslie Spaulding's shop in Hagley Gap Square, also in Hagley Gap Community Center.
- c.) These meetings took place to plan out what was going to happen and take place over the next two months.
- d.) These meetings took place at the beginning of "My Island Through My Eyes," in July 2007.
- e.) Kelly Lynch organized these Youth Leader meetings.
- f.) About five – ten people were exposed to these meetings.
- g.) The outcome of these meetings was youth leader knowledge and expectations of the project. Job roles and brainstorming were also a result.

- h.) These meetings were a success and a great start to "My Island Through My Eyes."

## 2. Traveling to Kingston (July 2007)

- a.) During these activities many trips back and forth two and from Kingston were made.
- b.) These trips took place by traveling by bus from Hagley Gap to Kingston.
- c.) These trips took place to get prices on lap tops, prices for materials, obtain materials and learn to use a computer at the Internet Café in Papine.
- d.) These trips took place several times in the first few weeks of "My Island Through My Eyes."
- e.) Kelly Lynch organized these trips along with the leaders, Kevin, KeMarley, Andrea and Lesley.
- f.) The five of us were directly exposed; many people of the community knew and saw us making these trips.
- g.) Our outcomes varied from learning computer skills, to meeting knew people, explaining our project, gaining knowledge and budgeting our money.
- h.) These trips were very successful and important for the future of our project.

## 3. Meeting with Youth Participants (July 2007)

- a.) At this meeting, the project "My Island Through My Eyes," was explained to the youth who were interested in being involved. Permission slips were handed out and responsibilities were made important.
- b.) This meeting took place at the Hagley Gap Community Center.
- c.) This took place to get the younger youth involved and interested in the project.
- d.) This meeting took place during the second week in July, 2007.
- e.) The Youth Leaders and Kelly Lynch organized this meeting.
- f.) About forty members of the Hagley Gap were exposed to this activity.

- g.) The outcome of this activity was getting about 20 youth to begin our workshops.
- h.) Yes, this activity was successful.

4. Youth Survey (July 2007)

- a.) During our first workshop the youth were given a survey about information that would be taught over the continuous workshops.
- b.) This Survey took place at the Hagley Gap Community Center.
- c.) This survey was to gain knowledge of what the children knew and didn't know about the process of photovoice and being an advocate for their community.
- d.) This took place July, 2007.
- e.) Kelly Lynch and Youth Leaders organized this activity.
- f.) About thirty people were exposed to this activity.
- g.) The outcome of this activity was that the youth began talking and asking questions about the camera, photography, issues in their community and much more.
- h.) Yes, this activity was a success.

5. Camera Workshops (July 2007)

- a.) Many camera workshops took place during these workshops.
- b.) These workshops were held at the Hagley Gap Community Center.
- c.) These workshops took place to teach the children how to use a camera and skills of being a photographer.
- d.) These workshops took place through July and August 2007.
- e.) Kelly Lynch and Youth Leaders organized These workshops.
- f.) Between twenty and thirty people were exposed to these workshops.
- g.) The outcome of these workshops was amazing photographs taken by the youth participants.
- h.) These workshops were a success because the photographs communicated what the youth had learned during the workshops.

6. Developing Photograph Trips (July – August 2007)
  - a.) Traveling to and from Kingston to have the youth participants photographs developed.
  - b.) Developing took place at Express Photo in Halfway Tree, Kingston.
  - c.) Developing took place for the youth and the Community Exhibit.
  - d.) Traveling to and from Kingston took place on Saturdays from July to August 2007.
  - e.) These trips were organized with Kelly and the Youth Leaders.
  - f.) The leaders and Kelly, plus youth and community were exposed to these travels.
  - g.) The outcome of developing the youth's photographs was the exhibit and exposure to the community.
  - h.) Yes, this was very successful.
7. ***Kingston Supply Runs (July - August 2007)***
8. ***Paint Workshops (August 2007)***
9. ***Writing Workshops (August 2007)***
10. ***AIDS Workshop (August 18th 2007)***
11. ***HANG POSTERS (August / January 2007)***
12. ***Handout Flyers (January 2007)***
15. Back to School Party / Opening Exhibit (Sep. 21<sup>st</sup> 2007)
  - a.) A back to school party with music, eye exams and our photovoice exhibit.
  - b.) This was held at the Hagley Gap Community Center.
  - c.) This took place to display the youth's work and to show the community the issues that the youth think need to be addressed in their community. It also took place to offer the community eye exams and back to school supplies.
  - d.) This event was held on Sep. 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007.

- e.) The Blue Mountain Project organized the event. The photovoice exhibit was organized by Kelly and Youth Leaders
- f.) About five hundred people were present through out this event.
- g.) The outcome of this event was, community involvement, a celebration, new eyeglasses and backpacks for back to school.
- h.) This activity was very successful.

16. Health Fair (January 4th 2007)

- a.) A group of doctors traveled to Hagley Gap to provide the community with free health care.
- b.) This took place in the Hagley Gap community Center and Clinic.
- c.) To give medical treatment to those in the community who cannot afford it.
- d.) This took place on January 4<sup>th</sup> 2007, and for one week afterwards.
- e.) The Blue Mountain Project organized this event, along with Andrea Edwards our Youth Leader.
- f.) 700 hundred people of the Blue Mountains and all of Hagley Gap Community were exposed to this activity.
- g.) The outcome, was AIDS awareness, education and free condoms. STD testing and treatment. Along with many medical needs and medication given for free.
- h.) Yes, this was very successful.

17. AIDS Surveys\* (April 2008)

17. Clean up Our Community (September 2007)

- a.) A community clean up of trash.
- b.) Through out Hagley Gap Community.
- c.) As a result of the youth's photographs they decided that they needed to have the community help with cleaning up all the pollution.
- d.) This took place the last week in September 2007.
- e.) Group leaders and youth participants organized this day.
- f.) Most of Hagely Gap Community was exposed to this activity.
- g.) The outcome, was less trash and hopefully less pollution in the future.

- h.) This activity could have been more successful.
18. Hurricane Dean Photo Show\* (upcoming April 2008)
  19. Re-building Our Community\* (upcoming as result of exhibit)

**Results:** With some many objectives involved in "My Island Through My Eyes," it was amazing to see that each objective was met by our activities. If we were to do this project again, we would suggest more time. We needed more time for computer training and skills. More time would have let us gain learn more. Since using the computer and camera is new to all of us it take us longer to produce things. Plus it is hard to create things on the computer to use when we do not have the ability to print or e-mail from Hagley Gap. We have not yet achieved our AIDS community survey or our Hurricane Dean exhibit.

1. *To give the youth of Hagley Gap, a rural Jamaican community in the Blue Mountains a visual voice through the use of photography.*
2. *Give the older youth a chance to be positive role models for all the youth in the community.*
3. *Create leadership roles and let the leaders be a part of teaching and educating the younger youth on community and how to create a positive and safe place to live.*
4. *Create social change through empowerment of youth in their community.*
5. *Offer the younger youth, old youth to talk to about what's going on in their lives.*
6. *Create awareness that the youth should work together.*
7. *Give youth a chance to be artist and bring art to their community.*
8. *Have an exhibit of photographs to bring about community involvement.*
9. *Make children aware that they are the future of their community and their nation.*
10. *Give youth that have no access to computers knowledge to technology and a chance to learn how to use computers and cameras.*
11. *Create a positive activity with the youth's findings from their photographs and begin making changes in the community.*
12. *Have youth lead and educate the community on AIDS and HIV through photography, posters and an AIDS awareness day.*

**Lessons Learned:** There were many lessons learned on many different levels. Things like leadership, communicating and collaboration were learned. Skills such as photography, artistic, and technical were learned. Being involved in a resourceful project taught many of the youth why it is important to work hard, get an education and give back to their community. Showing youth that there is a lot of different ways to think; to learn and to get involved has lead to



stronger personalities. Over the course of the project many of the youth became more outgoing, less afraid to share ideas and more confident.

The lessons I, Kelly learned through this project were the importance of giving youth a chance to learn, be themselves and be creative. I learned that empowering youth can lead and make many changes to things that affect them. I learned a lot about the community of Hagley Gap and the youth living there that I did not know. I especially learned that making assumptions about certain people, places or things can be the wrong way to view a different culture. I saw the process of photovoice unfold and how powerful it is. I heard and saw many visual voices of Hagley Gap. I saw the youth smile and take pride in what they do. This project made me proud. This is going to be one of the most meaningful experiences of my life.

**Future Activities:** “My Island Through My Eyes” has become bigger than we ever thought. The exhibit of both Kelly’s documentary photographs and the youth participant’s photographs have been on display in three different art exhibits. At this time we are working on planning our final exhibitions of our Hurricane Dean Community exhibit and a celebration exhibit/dinner in Kingston, Jamaica. As a group we decided that the youth participants of this project should be able to see their photographs and their message being made outside their community in a bigger exhibit. The photographs represent them in their community; their photographs are personal, public and community art. With a bigger opening and a bigger gallery outside their mountain community will show the youth participants what it’s like to have your work on display for a larger viewing audience. This final exhibit will get the youth out of their community, give them a chance to celebrate all the work they did and make them feel proud.

**Conclusion:** (By: Kelly Lynch)

I do not think that my personal thoughts and experiences through this project could ever be fully explained. What I can say is that the project grew and changed in ways I never imagined. The minds of the youth and the youth leaders made my expectations of this project seem too small.

Through out this project I saw a community of youth come together, rise above their comfort levels and open their minds to learning. I saw how bringing new opportunities and resources to these young minds could change their lives. Tears streamed down my face many times as I got to watch how a method such as photovoice brings children together, gets them to talk about their lives and teaches them responsibility and ownership.

I was amazed by the effort, excitement, and participation in this project. My leaders became natural teachers and role models for the

younger youth; the participants became advocates, artists and individuals. I saw new relationships build, ideas grown and skills developed.

I remember at the first photography workshop that not one of the youth participants knew what the word photographer was. I remember asking what it would be like to have a career as a photographer and how taking a picture requires thinking ahead and trying to build a piece of artwork that communicates a meaning. When I saw the final photographs and the youth's descriptions of why they took a specific photo I was speechless. These young youth participants who had never taken a picture, did not know what a photographer was and had never set up a composition to communicate their ideas created interesting compositions with balance, light, angles and clear communication of what matters to them in their community.

The activities offered through out this project were respected by all the youth. They were always on time (not typical of people of the Jamaican culture), they asked questions, absorb as much knowledge as they could and were always willing to write, paint, cleanup, and be part of the team.

As an art educator I found that these youth had more drive to learn and be taught than any other group of children I have ever worked with. As an artist documenting this project I watched the natural abilities of these youth grow and change into positive advocates. I hope that this project was an opening to new ideas, bigger goals and better outcomes for the youth of Hagley Gap.

### Financial Report:

Jamaica Dollars

1 JMD = 0.0140115 USD

United States Dollars

1 USD = 71.3700 JMD

<b>Purchase</b>	<b>\$JA</b>	<b>\$US</b>	<b>Document #</b>
Lap Top- online purchase		\$728.00	1.
8 Digital Cameras		\$412.08	2.
8 Memory Cards –online purchase		\$118.72	3.
Camera Cases – online purchase		\$39.76	4.
Photo Processing	\$2,750.00	\$38.53	5.
	\$2,750.00	\$38.53	9.
	\$2,586.00	\$41.85	10.
	\$3,984.00	\$55.82	
	\$5,475.00	\$77.80	6.
	\$7,500.00	\$105.18	7.
3 Sheet Plywood Wood	\$3,110.55	\$43.62	8.
Nails	\$167.76	\$2.35	8.
Hanging Cord	\$250.00	\$3.50	8.

Tools	\$4,013.43	\$56.30	8.
Paints / Art Supplies / Paint Brushes	13,480.00	\$128.60	
Workshop Supplies	\$4,084.39	\$57.23	11.
• Writing supplies	\$2,586.30	\$36.20	
• Flyers	\$180.00	\$2.52	16.
• Snacks	\$2,346.53	\$32.89	
AIDS WORKSHOP	\$2,000.00	\$28.00	
*Hired Cook	\$3,500.00	\$50.00	
Workshops Food	\$15,000.00	\$210.00	
Kingston Leader Lunch	\$810.00	\$11.35	17.
Exhibit Costs	\$3988.52	\$55.90	12.
• Refreshments			
• Hired Cook	\$3,500.00	\$50.00	
Sound Rental	\$4,000.00	\$56.00	
Community Clean-up	\$2,600.00	\$36.42	18.
• Garbage Bags			
• Refreshments	\$3,500.00	\$50.00	
• Removal			
Health Fair	FREE	FREE	
All Travel Expenses	\$30,000.00	\$400.00	
* For computer workshops			
* To buy supplies			
* To develop photo processing			
* To buy workshop groceries			
Hagley Gap to Papine round trip = \$280.00JA			
Papine to Halfway Tree round trip = \$100.00JA			
One-way bus travels = between \$50.00 - \$70.00JA			
Building Materials Haul	\$5,500.00	\$77.13	13.
Internet Usage Charges (\$500.00JA per 1hr)	\$3,200.00	\$44.84	14.
B-Mobile Phone Chip	\$300.00	\$4.26	15.
*Dean Photo Processing	\$5,000.00	\$70.00	
*Dean Exhibit	\$10,000.00	\$140.00	
-framing			
-refreshments			
-sound rental			
*Kingston Exhibit		\$200.00	
- Bus charter for Opening – all youth			
- Space rental (if not donated)			
- Youth Celebration Dinner			
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$249,585.00</b>	<b>\$3,500.00</b>	

\* Activities and Expenses not yet complete.

## Additional Project Expenses:

### Kelly's Travel

Travel Dates	Cost
6/24/07 – 9/4/07	\$579.00
12/27/07 – 1/17/08	\$452.00

### Boston Exhibits:

**Details of costs:** Blowing up photos, framing all photos, invitation postcards and refreshments.

Location	Dates	Cost
Morran Gallery	12/10/07 – 01/14/08	\$ 234.00
Wedmen Gallery	01/19/08 – 02/7/08	\$ 145.00
<i>Printing/framing</i>		<i>\$ 200.00</i>

### Attached:

CD #1

- Final Report
- Kelly Lynch's Documentary Photographs

CD #2

- Youth Photographs
- Hurricane Dean's Damage Photographs