

# SUCCESS STORY

## Youth in Dar take the Driver's Seat in a Campaign to Protect themselves from HIV/AIDS

**Youth used art, modern and traditional music as a tool for promoting abstinence and faithfulness.**



Family Health International / YouthNet Tanzania, (Matthew Mwakagamba)

Kinondoni youth engaged in interactive theatre and dance performances stressing messages and skills for practicing abstinence and faithfulness.

With support from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, through USAID/Tanzania, Family Health International's YouthNet-Tanzania (YN/T) project collaborated with Kinondoni Municipal Council and several youth-led organizations, to conduct a week-long festival, from 9-14 October 2005, for youth living in Kinondoni. The festival was part of the national week to honor Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania. The message for this year's events was "Let's protect women and girls against HIV/AIDS." The festival aimed to strengthen skills for preventing new HIV infections among youth in Kinondoni and neighboring districts. Young people received HIV prevention messages through one-to-one communication, popular theatre, sports, and other forms of "edutainment." Fourteen local organizations and projects provided information about their services at exhibition booths at the Biafra grounds, where the festival was held, and youth attending the festival had an opportunity to exhibit and visit exhibitions of youth-focused HIV prevention and economic organizations.

Kinondoni district has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in Tanzania. Besides the usual challenges that adolescents face, youth in Kinondoni are exposed to risky behavior such as drug abuse, prostitution, alcohol abuse, and hooliganism – all problems that are prevalent in the district. YN/T recognizes the vulnerability of youth, but also recognizes their central role in preventing HIV infections among themselves and their peers. The youth festival provided an opportunity for youth to take the driver's seat in promoting HIV prevention. "If youth are at the center of the HIV emergency in Tanzania, we must be at the center of current prevention efforts," said Samwel Matiko, a member of YN/T's Youth Executive Committee.

The Youth Week festivities were preceded by a one-day workshop for sports participants at the Vijana Youth Centre. In keeping with the festivals theme, all of the sporting events were for girls only. Facilitators oriented the participating youth on sports rules as well as the central HIV prevention messages to be delivered throughout the festival. A total number of 191 girls, who would compete in football and dodge ball during the festival, participated in the workshop

The sports competition kicked off with 8 girls' football and 8 girls' dodge ball teams. Youth turned out in large numbers to watch the games, and cheer on their teams. The youth also found themselves actively involved in discussions about HIV prevention.

One of the most exciting events at the festival was the banner competition. Spectacular artwork, created by youth camps, informal youth groups, was entered into

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Dr. Mark Dybul (right center), Deputy US Global AIDS Coordinator, visited the Kinondoni Youth Festival. He spent time at each of the exhibits learning about the organization's contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDS among youth in Tanzania.

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**-Samwel Matiko**

YN/T Youth Executive Committee

the competition. Youth from camps who might have otherwise been involved in risky practices spent time learning and developing creative and effective messages on abstinence and faithfulness, specifically referring to the challenges that youth face in Kinondoni. The essence of this competition was to tap into young people's creativity, to encourage them to study their practices, and to develop messages that will help them stay protected from HIV/AIDS.

Quiz sessions were used to strengthen the messages that were delivered through various methods (including drama, rap, traditional dances, comedy, banners, poetry, and acrobatics). All programs promoted messages of abstinence, faithfulness, and YN/T's "Zingatia J6: Jilinde, Jitahidi, Jipende, Jitambue, Jithamini, Jiheshimu – Subiri message (Pay attention to the J6: Protect yourself, Work hard, love yourself, Know yourself, Value yourself, Respect yourself - Abstain). The last of these messages was the most popular among the youth. These messages not only give youth ideas about ways to protect themselves but they also empower youth by promoting integrity and self-confidence.

The youth week event at Biafra-Kinondoni was successful because it enabled youth to plan, organize, and conduct a wide range of activities all focused on this year's theme "Lets protect women and girls against HIV/AIDS". An estimated 28,360 youth, 14,223 of whom were girls, were reached during this festival. In their speeches, both government officials and youth expressed satisfaction on the approaches used at the festival. Hon. Athumani Mdoe, the District Commissioner for Kinondoni, emphasized the importance of coordinating youth activities in his speech opening the festival. The youth speakers called for more events that directly involve and promote the health of youth.

Mr. M. Ntandu, the Regional Administrative Secretary, gave closing remarks on behalf of the Regional Commissioner. He thanked Family Health International and YouthNet for the impressive work they have been doing in his region. He remarked "I would like to give my thanks for being able to participate in the closing day of this event. I am happy to be with you youth at this event. I also give my thanks and tell you honestly that youth are precious in this nation, especially in fighting against HIV and AIDS." (Quotation translated from Kiswahili)

The Kinondoni Youth Festival was honored to welcome Dr. Mark Dybul, Deputy U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator. Dr. Dybul took the time to visit each of the exhibits at the festival, learning about all of the working being done to fight HIV/AIDS among Tanzanian youth.