

# SUCCESS STORY

**Vijana wanaweza kuleta mabadiliko, tuwaunge mkono ili tufanikishe**  
**“Youth can make changes; let’s join hands to make it happen”**

## Youth find festival events and messages of abstinence encouraging and useful for everyday life



Family Health International-YouthNet Tanzania, (Matthew Mwakagamba)

Makete youth theatrical performance group, educates community through spreading messages of AB: abstinence, being faithful.

*“Youth have to understand that abstinence is the only way they can completely free themselves from the deadly effects of HIV/AIDS.”*

Mr. Gowele, Iringa District AIDS Coordinator

11,809 in-school youth, 12,326 out-of school youth, and 2,259 community members were reached during the Makete Youth Festival. Messages of abstinence and faithfulness instilled hope in youth. Today, Tanzanian youth need alternatives and positive outlets to effectively contest the impacts of HIV/AIDS.

YouthNet-Tanzania (YN/T), with support from U.S. Agency for International Development and collaboration with several other organizations, organized the Makete festival from March 21-26, 2005. The cultural event aimed to promote positive life decisions, avoid risky sexual reproductive health practices and decrease new HIV infections among Makete’s youth.

Makete, located in the southwest region of Iringa, is home to 21,212 youth. Iringa has the second highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Tanzania at 13.4%. The vast numbers of youth coupled with the current HIV prevalence rate, necessitates an increased positive focus on Makete’s youth. It is apparent increased life skills, knowledge, and attitudes towards reproductive health (RH) and HIV/AIDS are required in order to provide a viable future for the youth.

Prior to the Makete Youth Festival, facilitators from Muungano Theatre Troup of Iringa worked together with the Makete District Cultural Officer to identify and screen theatrical groups at the village level. These groups were trained to incorporate RH and HIV/AIDS messages into theatrical performances. These trainings engaged the theatre groups and local youth to identify issues affecting RH and HIV/AIDS among Makete youth and to educate the entire community on means to promote healthier lifestyles.

The major issues identified were poor SRH knowledge, alcohol abuse, lack of proper parental care, and sexual survival strategies. These issues created avenues for collaborating organizations and Makete youth to implement “edutainment” programs. These programs included: football competitions, RH music and quizzes, poetry, drama, traditional dance, and acrobatics. All programs promoted messages of abstinence, faithfulness, and Zingatia J6: Jilinde, jitahidi, jipende, jitambue, jithamini, jiheshimu, (Pay attention to (J6): Protect, work hard, love, identify, and value yourself). These messages not only give youth options on ways to protect themselves but they also empower youth with strength and integrity.

The Makete Youth Festival was a success. High numbers of youth were effectively and positively reached. The youth highly appreciated the week and were eager to hear a nongovernmental organization (NGO) reinforcing the tenet of abstaining from sex. Mr. Gowele, the District AIDS Coordinator, inaugurated the festival in an opening day address. Mr. Gowele insisted youth practice abstinence, which is the most definitive way of preventing HIV infections. On the final day of the festival the Makete District Commissioner, Mr. A. Kapinga gave closing remarks and supported the J6 message, which promotes life skills and positive living for youth.