



RAPID FUNDING ENVELOPE FOR HIV/AIDS: TANZANIA



YOUNG BRIGADIERS IN MARA REGION COMBATING HIV/AIDS IN STYLE



What began as collaboration between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT)—Diocese of Mara and Badilika Foundation in developing a project proposal, has fast evolved into a vibrant movement of young people in school committed to the fight against HIV/AIDS. The youth, who proudly identify themselves as “Brigadiers,” have formed HIV/AIDS awareness groups commonly referred to as “Brigades” and are using these as a platform to reach out to other students and the community with messages on HIV prevention. The “Youth against HIV/AIDS” project aims to reduce vulnerability of young people in school to HIV through various awareness-raising activities including formation of the brigades, comprehensive training through youth camps, interschool performing arts competitions, essay writing competitions and peer education. With a grant of Tsh.250,538,700 from the Rapid Funding Envelope (RFE), the project has managed to cover 55 schools (30 primary and 25 secondary) in all the five districts of Mara Region.

The “Youth against HIV” Project reached thousands of young people in school as well as community members with messages on HIV prevention, stimulated huge demand for voluntary counselling and testing for HIV, and made it possible for over 760 youths and community members to know their status and make informed decisions for their health and wellbeing.

Wesiko Kigori, a 16-year old form-four student at Kianyari Secondary School in Musoma District, is one of the brigadiers trained by the project as a peer educator. She is the youngest in a family of twelve. Wasiko’s four brothers and two sisters have died. She cannot exactly say what caused all the deaths in the family but adds that she was old enough when her last two brothers died to tell that both were cases of HIV/AIDS. Unfortunately, her family believed that one of their neighbours was behind the chain of deaths in the family. After receiving training as a peer educator, she gathered courage to talk to her brother about his health and encouraged him to go for an HIV test. “It was not easy convincing him to make that step but I kept pressing on until he took the test and learnt that he was HIV positive. He received the necessary counselling support and [was] put on treatment but I think his immunity had become very weak, he submitted to the scourge!” she explains, her voice slowly waning from emotion. Hours after the brother’s burial, there was a clan meeting to review the events of the funeral. Wesiko was in attendance. “I told myself, I am not going to miss this opportunity to break the silence about the cause of my brother’s death and diffuse the long-existing tension between my family and our neighbours. I had the guts. I did it! Everyone was shocked but I am happy the families were eventually reconciled. This has earned me so much respect in the whole clan,” she says.



Ogango Komolo, MediaNet Ltd 2010

Wesiko Kigori, the brigadier who broke the silence about HIV/AIDS in her family.

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In the neighbouring Butiama Secondary School, Ally Rashid Kagoma narrates how he took his dad through everything he was taught at the training camp and his dad was so impressed that he invited him to share the same talk with members of the dad's SACCO. At the end of the talk, he was given Tsh.5000 in appreciation of his good work in educating the community about HIV prevention. At Mkengwa Primary School in Rorya District, Saidi Nyangogo is not only a star at school but in the entire village. He was the main actor in the award winning regional play during the "Youth against HIV/AIDS" interschool competitions. He played the role of "Fataki"—characterisation of a womaniser who mainly goes for young girls in school. Saidi is happy about his popularity but for a reason. "I think when people see me they are reminded about the sort of person they should not be or should avoid—the real Fataki. This is what makes me happy," he explains.

At Kinesi "B" Primary School (Rorya District), the young brigadiers are all smiles as they share their experience. They have been invited twice to two major national events (International AIDS Day Commemoration and the National Independence Torch Rally – Mwenge) to present their HIV/AIDS song which took the first position regionally during the interschool competitions. As a result of their sterling performance at both events, the Mara Regional Commissioner paid them a special visit at the school in January 2010 to acknowledge their role in creating awareness about HIV/AIDS. Mr. Jonathan Wang'uba, the "Youth against HIV/AIDS" project manager reports that the youth against HIV/AIDS awareness-raising activities stimulated huge demand for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) services in the entire project area, forcing the project to introduce the VCT component which was not part of its original design. With additional financial support from the RFE, several students, teachers, and community members were tested for HIV and received results.



We have tested for HIV and know our status: A section of Butiama Secondary School students (in a show of hands) who received VCT services provided by the Youth Against HIV project



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The joy of being a brigadier: Kinesi B Primary School brigadiers in jerseys bought using the cash prize won by producing the winning song on HIV/AIDS.

KEY PROJECT OUTPUTS:

- 29,500 youths reached with HIV prevention messages in 55 schools (25 secondary and 35 primary)
- 55 HIV/AIDS brigades formed in all the 55 schools and 2,368 members registered as brigadiers
- 200 brigadiers trained as peer educator on HIV/AIDS through 2 youth camps
- 55 teachers involved in peer education during the youth camps
- 12,200 leaflets, 4,500 posters, 3,000 copies a booklet title "the Youth and HIV/AIDS", 600 T-shirts, produced and distributed to all the 55 schools covered by the project
- 5 performing arts and essay writing competitions at the district level and 1 regional level competitions and awards ceremony, all successfully conducted
- 763 youths and community members tested for HIV and received results
- 1 documentary produced to tell the project story

Story and Photographs by Ogango K'omolo, MediaNet Ltd, komolo@medianettz.com, June 2010.



For more information on the Rapid Funding Envelope, please contact:

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