



DSW

**FIT FOR FUTURE: A RIGHTS BASED
RESPONSE TO SRH AND WORKING
CONDITIONS FOR GIRLS IN INFORMAL
SECTOR**

**8th International Dialogue on Population and
Sustainable Development Making Sexual and
Reproductive Rights a Reality: What does it take?
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Introduction

Tanzania to be classified as a young nation. According to the Population census 2002, Tanzania population was 34,443,603. With an annual growth rate of 2.3, it is estimated that country's population is now approximating 40 million. Of this population 55% of the population is under 25 years of age with adolescents aged 10-19 comprising almost 25% of the population and young people aged 10-24 over 30% (2002 Census). Being the driver of future and current development, a healthy youth will ensure sustainability of the social, economic and political development. The Tanzania government has invested heavily in education, health and infrastructure among others. CSOs in the country work to compliment the work of government especially in areas where the public is underserved or needs have been identified.

Youth and informal sector employment

On average, 650,000 people enter the labour market for the first time every year (2003 Economic Survey). Since formal jobs are few, most of the new job seekers find employment in the informal sector.

Of all the new job seekers, more than half are youth aged 15 to 29 years. A further, 3.5 percent of the youth aged 15 and 29 years are employed in homes as security guards, domestic workers and gardeners. Others are in transport, agriculture, bars and small scale mining (DSW has worked with youth in employment within informal small-scale mining at Mererani in Tanzania for the last 5 years). Though characterised by ease of entry, most informal sector jobs are associated with low incomes and unfavourable working conditions. This leads to significant amount of youth migration and various efforts to supplement the low incomes earned in the informal sector.

Informal sector employment and sexual reproductive health (SRH)

Some of the efforts to supplement income push some of the female youth within the informal sector to engage in risky behaviours including early debut into sexual activity, transactional sex, multiple sexual partners, cross generational sex, unprotected sex and, prostitution. This increases their vulnerable to adolescent pregnancy and child bearing, complications of unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS (Adolescent Health and Development Strategy, 2004-2008).

Fit for Future: A Rights Based Response by DSW & Partners

Informed by its work in the mines of Mererani, DSW in partnership with the Family Planning Association of Tanzania (UMATI) and Tanzania 4H Organisation designed a rights based project to address working conditions and sexual reproductive health (SRH) needs of girls working in the informal sector. The goal of the action is to contribute towards poverty alleviation through enhancement of socio-economic status of working female youth. Immediate objectives are: (1) reduction of incidences of HIV/AIDS/STIs (2) improved access to SRH information and youth friendly SRH services (3) sustainable economic empowerment of female youth working in informal sector and (4) improved awareness and working conditions for female youth within informal sector work.

The project target is to directly reach 165,000 female youth in the three regions of Arusha, Kilimanjaro and Tanga. The three regions form part of the Northern circuit of Tanzania, with a combined population of 4,316,137 (Census 2002) and approximately current population 5,110,306 at 2.3% annual growth rate.

Main achievements:

- The project has support from **9** district councils within the working clusters. The nature of support is stipulated in memorandum of understanding (MoUs)
- Established of **90** female youth clubs. Each youth club has a minimum of 30 members totalling to **2700** members. The clubs offer a unique space for the girls to provide peer support, solidarity and guidance on SRH and economic issues
- Trained **72** health service providers on provision of youth friendly services
- Strengthening provision of ASRH youth friendly services in **9** project clusters
- Strengthened **6** VCT centres to provide ASRH youth friendly services
- Working with established companies in areas such as floriculture, textile and small scale businesses to improve working conditions and access to SRH services
- **900** youth with SRH complications referred and assisted to get specialised medical services
- Withdrawal and support for female youth in abusive work environments and those at risk for vocational training and placement in school for education. A total of **240** girls have been assisted



Hon. Margaret Sitta, Minister - Community Development, Gender and Child Affairs joins female youth during the launch of the project



Mwanahawa, rescued from abusive domestic work here trains in vocational skills

- Provision of SRH education, training and services to workers in plantations in partnership with **Tanzania Horticultural Association (TAHA)**
- Provision of SRH education, training and services to employees at **A to Z textile company** (the company has over 7,000 workers most casual/temporary)
- Working with bar, guest house, restaurant and other small business owners to provide SRH supplies, education and services to workers
- Conducting outreach education works in informal sector concentrated areas

Lessons learnt

- Work with employers is not easy. Suspicion of intention of working with youth as covert way towards agitation for better salaries or unionisation. You address working conditions on periphery and concentrate on SRH before you can build adequate confidence to address working conditions and terms.
- Flexibility in meeting needs – though the project was designed for support to single girls, some girls have children and could not be discriminated against on this basis. However, supporting them had to include child support as well.
- Community participation is important to realisation of needs of vulnerable groups especially youth in informal sector. Some of the examples of how community support is demonstrated include:
 - ***‘Ukiwa na Ubinafsi ni Uadui –Isolationism and Individualism is an Enemy Youth Club’*** at Mto wa mbu, where the village government gave the club financial and other support in a public fundraising in support of its club’s fund
 - ***‘Mkombozi – Saviour Youth Club’*** - at Karanga in Moshi has been granted a meeting room to conduct its meeting by the village government.
 - ***‘Mapinduzi - Revolution and Juhudi – Effort Youth Clubs’*** at Sanya station have been given plots by the community for horticulture.
- Conditions to access credit from existing microfinance institutions are not youth friendly
- Life skills that improve decision making, communication and assertiveness in SRH are integral interventions targeting youth
- Participation of key agents such as parents, teachers and religious leaders is crucial for sustainability of SRH are integral interventions targeting youth



Mwanahawa holding her baby her vocational skills classes.

- The fundamental principals of work especially decent work are not easy to attain in conditions where unemployment is high. This was demonstrated by the opposition to Labour Institutions (Regulation of Wages and Terms of Employment) Order, 2007 which were made to revise the old, minimum wage (Tsh 48,000/= for urban and Tsh 35,000/= for rural areas) with minimum wage for each sector (ranging from a low of Tsh 65,000/= to a high of Tsh 350,000/=).

Recommendations

- Youth have special needs and can be supported and guided to establish their own savings and credit organisations (SACCOS)
- Government commitment to universal access to education for levels such as secondary school needs international support
- Commitments to poverty eradication must be matched with resources – shifting of donors
- There is need to integrate education, vocational skills training and support for income generating projects (IGAs) in projects targeting youth in areas where rights are violated.
- A project targeting out of school girls should have a child care component as some will have children or be pregnant due to rights violations.
- Youth friendly services depend on training of service providers and support of health facilities with equipment and supplies
- The justice system should handle violations of girls' rights speedily to ease pain and restore hope in life
- Advocacy for improvement of working conditions must be both participatory and decentralized
- Life skills training - on issues like assertiveness and communication empower girls decision making