



## **Femina HIP Youth Conference 2010: From Life Skills to Livelihoods - Promoting Entrepreneurship Education in Schools**

*By Julia Thorfinn & Ane-Kirstine Bagger*

Every year, Femina HIP gathers **100 students and teachers** from every region of Tanzania to participate in the annual Youth Conference. In 2010, the conference was held at Belinda Resort in Dar es Salaam from January 25-27. For the fourth time, youth affiliated with Femina HIP through the Fema Club network met to learn, exchange experiences and discuss issues of healthy lifestyles and life skills. This year, the theme was “From Life Skills to Livelihoods: Promoting Entrepreneurship Education in Schools.”



### **FAST FACTS: FEMINA HIP**

Over the past 10 years, Femina HIP’s multimedia platform has gained a massive popularity. Each year, Femina’s media products reach an estimated 10 million Tanzanians. With 2.8 million readers every week, Fema is the most read magazine in Tanzania.

Since 1999, Femina HIP has been promoting healthy lifestyles with a strong focus on sexual health, HIV prevention, gender equality and life skills. Now the organisation is evolving its agenda around entrepreneurship, financial education and livelihoods.

Using its recurring media products, Fema and Si Mchezo! magazines as well as Fema TV Talk Show, Femina HIP is increasingly assisting young people across the country in improving their financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills by providing information on saving schemes and how to set up small scale businesses.

In her opening speech, Femina HIP’s Executive Director, Dr. Minou Fuglesang, explained why the organization is now expanding its agenda to work with entrepreneurship and financial education to complement the agenda on youth sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

“Through years of working with young people we have come to appreciate the link between the ability to earn an income and the muscle to **say NO to risky sexual behaviour**. Issues of unemployment and lack of income contribute to poverty and the further spread of HIV among youth”, she said.

The **Deputy Minister for Labour, Employment and Youth Development**, Hon. Dr. Makongoro Mahanga, attended the opening of the conference. In his speech, he congratulated Femina HIP on ten successful years.

“The information you have shared with our youth have brought big changes to the country and has empowered the youth to make informed decisions.” He continued:

“I commend Femina HIP for making the connection between poverty and the ability to say no when caught up in a sticky situation. The government, through my ministry, is ready to work together with Femina HIP to impart entrepreneurship skills to the youth and to start saving schemes so that they will be able to get their projects off the ground.”

On this first day of the conference, **awards** for ‘Fema Club of the Year’ and ‘Teacher of the Year’ were given out and a new Fema Ambassador was appointed. Every year, Femina HIP gives out these awards to encourage teachers and students to engage with Fema magazine and to continue to promote Femina HIP’s agenda and media products in their communities.

Ndabo Fema Club from Ndanda Boys Secondary School in Masasi, Mtwara won the title of ‘Fema Club of the Year.’ The winner of ‘Teacher of the Year’, Thompson Michael Sanga, was very happy when he hear the news: “I was so surprised, I had no idea I was even nominated”, says Thompson who is teaching maths and physics at Lugoba Secondary School in Chalinze, Bagamoyo. “This will definitely make the Fema Club in my school more accepted amongst my fellow teachers, and my students will be very proud.”

## Setting business skills and entrepreneurship on the agenda

### **FAST FACTS: YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT IN TANZANIA**

According to the latest census, 63% of the Tanzanian population is under 25 years old. 20% are between 15 and 24 years old. It is estimated that the unemployment rate for youth between 15 and 24 is at a staggering 35%.

Only 6% of the Tanzanian youth have formal employment. 11% are self-employed; out of these 13% are young men and 10% are young women. It is this group that Femina HIP wants to expand by increasing the focus on livelihoods and entrepreneurship.

Source: ‘Views of the Children 2007’

### **FAST FACTS: FEMMA CLUBS**

Since 2000, Femina HIP has encouraged students to set up Fema Clubs. Today, there are more than 500 clubs across the country.

Fema Clubs aim to strengthen youth leadership, voluntarism, grass root organization and a culture of reading. Extra curricular activities – such as clubs – are endorsed by the MoEVT and research shows that Fema Clubs constitute an important forum for sexuality education and life skills training in today’s school setting.

Fema Clubs are an effective means of bringing together young people to discuss issues around sexuality and healthy lifestyles and of stimulating peer education, leadership and community service. At the same time, the clubs give the audience a stronger affiliation with Femina HIP products and a feeling of belonging to the Femina HIP family.

Each issue of Fema magazine has dedicated club pages where Fema Clubs share their experiences.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship is encouraged in the National Youth Development Policy from 2007. However, very few resources have been channelled into implementing the policy. Femina HIP’s experiences show that there is a **huge demand** among youth for the initiatives presented in the policy. Over and over again, youth have urged Femina HIP to talk not only about healthy lifestyles, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS but to include business skills and income generation on the agenda. As a result of these requests, the agenda is now promoted through all Femina HIP’s recurring media

products. Fema and Si Mchezo! magazines have dedicated pages talking about jobs and money and Fema TV Talk Show has taken up the discussion in several programs.

The goal of this year's Youth Conference was therefore to **equip the participants** with hands-on knowledge, inspiration and skills about how to improve their livelihoods. A number of presentations, workshops and group discussions on entrepreneurship and how to use Fema Clubs in income generation activities were held during the three day event.

Femina HIP is working closely with the Inspectorate Department of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) to boost not only life skills but also livelihood and self-reliance activities in schools in order to **prepare young people** for self-employment after they graduate.

Mr. Sosthenes Y. Ngussa, a **school inspector** from MoEVT facilitated a discussion on how entrepreneurship education can be included in the school setting.

"Some of the students asked questions about why our current education system does not equip them adequately for being entrepreneurs", the school inspector said after his presentation. "My answer to that is that we see the flaws, and we are trying to do something about them. The curriculum is now being revised, and we have recently introduced vocational skills from standard 3."

Mr. Ngussa also pointed out the importance of clubs in schools.

"The Minister of Education and Vocational Training strongly supports the clubs. They are an important arena for students to learn about communication, leadership and life skills", said Mr. Ngussa.

**Junior Achievers**, an international NGO dedicated to promoting workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy among students, also facilitated a session talking about how students can prepare themselves for the realities after graduating. Junior Achievers works with mentoring programs, volunteering and hands-on training showing youth how to access micro loans and saving schemes, how to generate income, and how to think like entrepreneurs.

## Launching the 'Right to Safe Light' campaign

### **The Right to Safe Light campaign aims to:**

- Improve the safety and health of students
- Improve study results
- Cut costs for schools and households

To really get the participants of the conference going on their way to becoming entrepreneurs, a campaign called 'The Right to Safe Light' was launched. The campaign is a **collaboration** between Femina HIP and the social enterprise D.light and aims to get both households and schools to switch from using dangerous and expensive kerosene lights to using **safe and clean, affordable solar lights**.

Across Tanzania, **several severe accidents** have happened in recent years where students have lost their lives in fires caused by kerosene lights and candles. One such example is the devastating fire in Idodi Secondary School in August 2009, where 12 girls died. As part of the campaign launch, a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the Idodi fire was held.

If the use of solar lights was more widespread, the risk of future accidents like this could be significantly reduced. Also, solar lights are healthier – both for the individual and for the environment – and have been proven to significantly **improve study results**. With a small investment in solar light, households and schools can cut expenses for kerosene considerably. Research shows that in rural Tanzania, 98% of all households use kerosene, and families spend up to 30% of their income on kerosene.

#### **FAST FACTS: D.light Design**

D.light Design is a social enterprise with the mission to enable households without reliable electricity to attain the same quality of life as those with electricity. The main aim is replacing every kerosene lantern with clean, safe and bright light.

The spokesperson of the campaign is the famous poet and change maker, Mrisho Mpoto, popularly known as Mjomba. During the campaign launch, Mrisho Mpoto performed his new song ‘Mama Siwema’ about solar lights.

#### **Mrisho Mpoto, poet and singer:**



The front figure of the Right to Safe Light campaign is himself a proud user of solar energy. And when he was asked to join the campaign there was no doubt.

“I have always been the voice of the voiceless. When I read about how Femina HIP works with the youth of this country, I knew to join them would be yet another way of speaking for the ones who are without their own voice in society”, says Mrisho Mpoto. “It’s a big thing to take action like Femina HIP does. A lot of people talk about it, but not as many actually do something”, he continues.

Mpoto says he wants a safe life for everybody in Tanzania.

“Everybody is talking about global warming and how carbon dioxide is polluting our environment. Switching from kerosene lights to solar lights is a simple way of making a difference and in

the end – it will save lives. We are a poor people, and we are using the little money we have on something as dangerous as kerosene.”

He was very distressed about the severe accidents that have recently occurred in schools around the country, where many young lives have been lost in fires caused by candles and kerosene lights.

These horrible incidents inspired Mpoto to write the song that was launched as part of the Right to Safe Light campaign. The song is called Mama Siwema, and it is the story about a young girl who dies when a candle falls over when she is studying.

“In the song I’m telling this girl’s mother that I’m very sorry, but this does not have to happen again. There is a solution now, and that is the solar light.”

And this song was, as it should be, written under safe circumstances – under a solar light.

“I have had my solar light for months now, and I’m very happy with it.”

#### **A new generation of (solar) entrepreneurs**

Prior to the campaign launch, Fema magazine had announced an **essay competition** asking readers to send in their ideas of how to become solar entrepreneurs and participate in the distribution of solar lights by setting up small businesses. At the Youth Conference, prizes were given to the three Fema readers who had won the essay competition and who are already on their way to become solar entrepreneurs themselves. They had competed with their ideas on how solar lights can be used in their communities and were each awarded with a starter pack of

three solar lights.

**Peseo Pio:**

When Peseo entered the competition, he knew it would be a difficult challenge.

“My main objective is to capacitate my community, to show them there are alternative ways to cut costs and even to make an income. Now that I have won, I’m excited for the whole community”, he says.

The starter pack with solar lamps will be used both for his own individual development, and for others.

“The one with a phone charger I will use for myself. There is electricity in my school, but there are a lot of power cuts. The other two lights I will give to my neighbours.”



But Peseo wants to go even further in empowering his community.

“I am already a solar ambassador, now I want to educate everybody about solar energy. But to do that properly I need more information to give to them. It would be great if such information was distributed with Fema magazine.”

**Kingi Kigongo, teacher:**

In his application for the solar entrepreneur award, Kingi drew a map of his village showing how most of the houses in the area did not have electricity.

“This was to show how huge the problem is”, he says. “And I thought that entering this competition could be a great way of introducing this new technology in my community.”

Being a teacher, he is excited about the award not only for himself.

“This will bring courage to all my students; they will have even more confidence in me. They are not familiar with solar energy yet, now I will be able to educate them. I will also connect with other schools in the area to spread the knowledge.”

The solar lamps that Kingi won will be used both in his house, where he lives with some of his students, and in the school itself.

“Last year our school spent a lot of money on fuel, now we don't have to do that any more.”

**Catherine Sambala, student at Dodoma University:**

“I have entered several other competitions before, but this is the first time I have won! Society needs to be educated about the use of solar energy, and now I can spread the word.”

In her essay Catherine stressed, amongst other things, how solar energy can save lives because it is much safer than kerosene lights.

“It's not only the risk of fires and the polluted air, it can even reduce the risk of malaria. If you have to study at night sitting at your desk you are exposed. With a solar light you can sit in your bed under a mosquito net and study”, she explains.

Catherine has already decided that winning this competition is not enough. Now she wants to become a solar entrepreneur for real! One of the solar lights in the starter pack she will send to her brother, who lives in a rural area where there is no electricity.

“He will charge people to use the light for charging their phones, and that way the light will generate a small income both for him and for me.”

Solar energy can also be an opportunity for young people to **stand on their own feet** as entrepreneurs; for example by getting actively involved in the distribution of solar lights. The initial investment does not have to be big. With one solar light, a little profit can be made. Anna Kihenga is a good example of this. She distributes and sells D.light solar lamps and calls herself a 'solar entrepreneur.' At the conference she shared her experiences in building a business.

**Anna Kihenga, solar entrepreneur:**

Anna Kihenga is a truly inspiring character. Only 26 years old, she set up her own business years ago. She shared her experiences in the business field with the students and teachers during the conference's second day.

"I have always known that I want to do business", Anna says. "It is in my heart. And if you keep reminding yourself, you will achieve what is truly within you."

After finishing a college degree in business administration, Anna first found a job in a company that deals with solar products.

"I didn't really know much about the technology at the time", she says. "But I learned a lot by selling and distributing their products. After two and a half years with them, I however felt I had to move on and create my own business."

Her family was not very happy about this decision. They thought it was safer to stay with the stable income from being employed, rather than taking the risk of being self-employed.

"But what they didn't realize is that being self-employed also means that you get a lot of opportunities. And in the long run, I can make even more money than if I am employed by somebody else."

A couple of years later, Anna has proved all the sceptics wrong! She is well on her way with her own business selling solar lights. She goes to rural areas both to sell the lights directly to the customers and to connect with possible whole sellers.

"We are trying to build a structure of dealers that can sell our products. Sometimes when we come to a village, people are interested in buying a light – but they don't have the money at the time. If there is a dealer in the area the customer can buy it later when he or she has saved up the money."

And the business is doing well.

*How many lights have you sold?*

"Oh, I don't have the exact figure", Anna lingers. "But well over one thousand", she concludes.

The participants at the Youth Conference were eager to learn, posing a lot of questions about how to find the courage to take the leap to become self-employed.

"You just have to overcome that first fear. Creating your own business may not be for everybody but if you find it in yourself that this is what you really want to do, it will come to you. The next step is to be active and creative. Try to see what problems there are around you and what solutions you can find to them", says Anna.

And you don't need a lot of money.

"Even if you can only afford to buy one solar light, you can earn an income from that to get you started. Invested wisely, the small profit from this one light will grow."

"The biggest challenge on the way to succeeding as an entrepreneur is to know your market", Anna says.

"Research is the key; you have to capture the market at the right time. For example, I know exactly when the people in a village have money to buy our products – often around harvest time - so that's when I will go to that place."

And the benefits of being self-employed are obvious.

"I manage my own time. There is no boss who tells me what to do!"

Even though she has already achieved a lot, Anna still has dreams. And having dreams and setting up goals to reach them is also one of the keys to her success, she thinks.

"In five years, I want to own at least ten houses that I can rent out and earn money from. And in an even longer perspective, I want to take my business abroad – maybe I can own a gold mine." And there is no reason to doubt that one day she actually will.

## Returning home with new knowledge, inspiration and dreams

On the last day of the conference, the students were given the opportunity to themselves think about how they could become (solar) entrepreneurs. After group discussions, the students shared their thoughts with the whole group in a range of presentations. And to kick-start their careers as possible solar entrepreneurs, each student was given a Solata solar lamp to take home!



After three intense days of hard work, the students were ready to conclude on the experience. Deborah Steven from Ibunglia Secondary School in Rungwe was **very content**. “I am happy to have met so many fellow Fema Clubbers”, she said. “I wasn't aware that Femina HIP focused on other things than health issues, and this is the first time I have heard about solar energy.” “I will go back to my school with a lot of new ideas”, said Hosna Kingi, a student at Itwelele Secondary School. “We are using candles in my family, now I will go home and educate them”.

The students from ‘Fema Club of the Year’ already know what they will do with their prize money. “We want to use it as a start capital to buy solar lights,” said Ashiri Mapunda from the winning club. “When we get back to school we will immediately discuss this with the members of our club.”

### **Jennifer Nsamuel, biology and geography teacher at Lamadi Secondary School:**

Jennifer Nsamuel is a true Fema veteran. She joined the Fema Club at her secondary school in 2001, and is now herself a teacher encouraging her own students to join the Femina HIP family. “I was 15 years old when I joined the Fema Club at Kigoma Secondary school, and it really changed a lot of things in my life”, says Jennifer.

Learning about HIV and sexual health was the most important objective for Jennifer. “I was young, and there was not much education available in this field. But being a member in the club also taught me many other things, like self-confidence, speaking in public and how to share my ideas with different people. That is why I now want my students to also join”, says Jennifer.

Though Jennifer is a long term member, this was her first time to participate in a Femina HIP Youth Conference. “These three days I have heard about challenges that are completely new to me, like how to be an entrepreneur. When I go back to my school I will organise the students even better to teach them how to live without being dependent.”

## After the conference



In the days during and after the Youth Conference, Femina HIP and its new agenda got a lot of attention from the **Tanzanian media**. Several electronic media covered the event including ITV, Channel 10, TBC1 and Radio One as did a number of blogs. The Citizen, This Day, Nipashe, Uhuru, Mtanzania and Mwananchi all had articles about the conference and Femina HIP's increased focus on livelihoods and entrepreneurship.

During the conference, Femina HIP used the opportunity to conduct a number of **feedback sessions** and brainstorm with the students. This input will now be fed back into our production process and help us make sure that we **stay in touch with our audiences**.

**Fema TV Talk Show** recorded a show at the Youth Conference. The show was aired few days after the conference ended and received a lot of **positive feedback** from viewers all over the country – including 100 SMS messages – showing great interest in the entrepreneurship agenda.