



# Healthy Youth Productive Lives

Empowering youth in the fight against HIV/AIDS

**Malawi's *Mphamvu Kwa Achinyamata* Clubs**

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## Youth: A Powerful Resource

In 2006, the USAID-funded Malawi Teacher Training Activity (MTTA) created the *Mphamvu Kwa Achinyamata* (MKA) or “Power to the Youth” clubs, to support USAID efforts at promoting school-based HIV and AIDS prevention education in Malawi. This brochure highlights key aspects of the initiative, and profiles just a few of the many successful club activities underway throughout Malawi.



The MKA school-based youth development clubs are built on the history of Malawi’s Edzi-Toto Clubs but provide dynamic invigoration of a school/community extra curricular format (clubs) to prevent and mitigate HIV and AIDS among people of all ages, particularly the youth. Clubs are mandated in their by-laws to include out-of-school youth, orphans and children with HIV and AIDS, stimulating community wide dialogue about youth development and HIV.

Teacher, youth and community member training and empowerment for the clubs includes training in club formation, leadership skills and how to elect officers, facilitating club meetings and managing club activities, HIV and AIDS prevention, care and support for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and others affected by AIDS. Club members have also received training in intergenerational dialogue techniques, advocacy and lobbying as well as in coordinating and collaborating with other implementing partners operating within their localities. All club activities and projects are selected, designed and led by school-aged youth, including their service projects and other community-wide activities:

- HIV/AIDS prevention education and activities in communities (community drama and outreach), action plans for communities to increase enrolment in school for AIDS orphans, girls, children with disabilities, and out of school youth
- vocational skills training, supporting low-tech labor demands for the local economy and agricultural skills for village farm work (such as bee-keeping, animal farming, demonstration gardens, compost manure making)
- school based activities promoting community health and nutrition (such as maintaining and cleaning health centers, encouraging VCT, providing food, clothing and shelter to the needy, constructing bridges)
- community improvement service projects (such as improving water and sanitation, developing ecologically sustainable agricultural activities such as planting trees for fruit or lumber, or renovating a clinic)

In addition to clubs electing youth officers and leaders, having regular meetings with fun activities after school, the MKA Clubs also develop and submit annual activity plans to the Primary Education Advisor (PEA) who is responsible for supporting the clubs, supervision of patrons and leadership, and helping teachers link club activities with time-tabled curriculum. The PEAs also help club youth and their leaders bridge to community members, helping teachers and youth achieve goals developed in club-led dialogue. In every case club members and leaders articulate how the activities they are engaged in contributes to prevention or mitigation of HIV and AIDS.

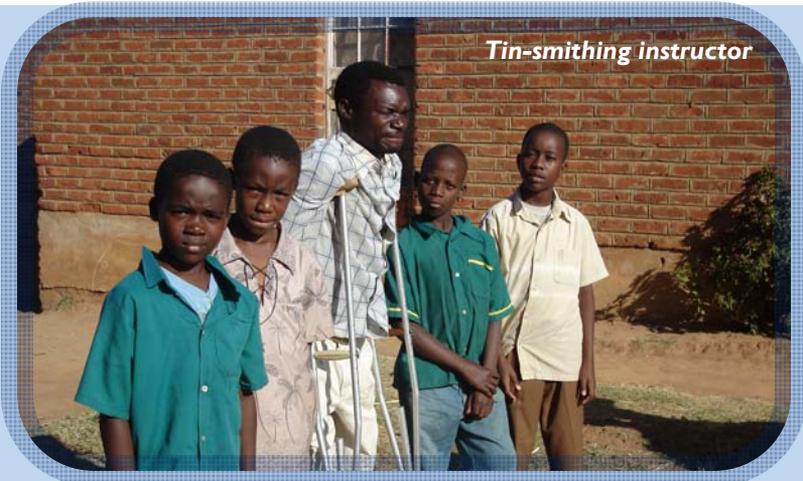
Since 2006, the model of the MKA club has spread rapidly as schools realize the benefits that club activities can bring to students, schools, and communities. From MTTA's initial pilot of 40 clubs in Kasungu District, there are now:

- 147 MKA clubs in Kasungu District
- District-wide MKA clubs in Mzimba South and Mzimba North Districts, supported with Local Assembly funds through a local government initiative
- 30 MKA clubs in Machinga and Phalombe Districts



## Boma School Kasungu District

The Boma School MKA club has made a special effort to combine games and vocational skills training with HIV prevention education and HIV mitigation, to instill youth with optimism about the role they can play in prevention of AIDS. The result has been that children learn practical skills and have fun at the same time they talk openly about the important role of youth in reducing HIV transmission in their community. Parents and other adults living in villages surrounding Boma School say school children and their MKA club has made a big difference in local attitudes toward HIV and AIDS, leading married couples to “be faithful,” and single adults to be more careful in relationships.



Club members grew a field of maize to sell and raise money for club activities. The proceeds from the sale of their maize was used to support the education of AIDS orphans and provide assistance to HIV affected elderly villagers who have no one to support or comfort them. Evance Kalamule, the Boma School MKA club president, explained that club members had also made baskets to raise money for club activities.

The MKA club also organized vocational training in tin-smithing from a disabled teacher who was certified in vocational training in Lilongwe, but was not using his special skills. In exchange for teaching them tin-smithing, club members voted to assist the teacher bringing in his maize harvest.

## Kanjuchi School Mzimba South District

Through excellent youth leadership and active teacher and community support the MKA club of Kanjuchi School has organized an astounding variety of activities, all linked to spreading lessons about the importance of preventing and mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS. The club applied for and received a Small Grant Challenge that enabled them to build a few activities with some costs into their annual activity plan. For example, The club planted a garden as an activity to learn about horticulture, and sold the vegetables so they could sponsor AIDS orphans and elderly affected by AIDS with food, clothing, medicine, books, pens and paper.



Because their treasury was growing, the students decided to lend money to members of the community at interest, learning more about business and finance. Now, through micro-finance they have nearly doubled their money, increasing the club treasury for future activities. To address a shortage of teachers for their school, the club decided to do something about a key cause - the lack of housing for teachers. The club decided to build a teacher's house that was designed to be built of traditional materials so that the club members could gather the resources and do all the construction themselves.

The club also conducts regular outreach activities to sensitize the community about ways to reduce the impact of AIDS, and the importance of avoiding HIV and AIDS. These outreach activities are linked to community service such as digging pit latrines for the elderly, repairing houses for the sick to cheer them, maintenance and tree planting for a local HIV clinic.

## Chinkhoma School Kasungu District

To reach Chinkhoma Primary School during Malawi's tobacco harvest season, a visitor must navigate the canyon-like walls of baled tobacco piled atop lorries on both sides of the road. Truck drivers walk the road in small groups, learning how long they have to wait before off-loading their valuable cargo for auction at the Chinkhoma Tobacco Warehouse, the school's immediate neighbor. The MKA club at Chinkhoma School, established in 2006, has capitalized on the presence of the tobacco warehouse to support education, while at the same time educating the community on the special dangers and risks associated with such close proximity to the busy economic center.



Members of the club decided to use a small challenge grant to purchase 70 kg. of tobacco from surrounding farmers and sell it on the warehouse auction floor in order to learn more about agribusiness, and generate income for the club's school health activities. In another activity, designed to teach club members and the community about forestry and environmental conservation, members acquired acacia seedlings from the government forestry department to plant a wind break beside their school.

The club also organized community wide dialogue to sensitize parents, teachers and girls about HIV prevention, and about the special high risks associated with youth socializing with older truck drivers in exchange for favors. The club's community awareness activities about the impact of HIV and HIV prevention dramatically reduced interaction between female students and truck drivers, and led to a 100% drop in the number of pregnancies and early marriages resulting from these relationships.

## Chitenje School Kasungu District

The Chitenje School MKA club has concentrated its efforts on fundraising to support orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV and AIDS. After the students established their club and voted into office all their club officers, the student members decided to sensitize the community about the importance of schooling for all children, but especially for orphans and girls. The students also voted to grow a field of maize and sell the harvest to support children affected by AIDS. The club was awarded a MKA small grants challenge award to support their maize farming. Through their efforts the club has provided material support for the education of AIDS orphans such as pencils, books, and uniforms.



Recently, the Chitenje MKA club decided to support establishment of a partner club at a school in Salima, in a neighboring area. The club members raised money and organized a field trip to Salima to show their sister school how to organize MKA clubs and to share their club materials. The Chitenje club also visited the Salima sugar plantation and refinery to learn about the sugar production industry while they were visiting Salima.

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“Before the introduction of MKA club at my school, school assemblies were dry and boring. But with the introduction of the MKA club, our assemblies are lively due to MKA performances for HIV prevention and impact mitigation. I really look forward to attending school every single day of the week.”

**Brenda Mvula, Chusefu School MKA club**

“Mphamvu Kwa Achinyamata is a powerful brand for youth development. Through the MKA club I have sharpened my leadership and public speaking skills.”

**Evanse Kalamule, Boma School MKA Club**

“I have been growing up with the belief that old and lonely men and women are wizards and witches. But after talking to them through our MKA activities I have come to realize that these people are just like us, and they need our help.”

**Moffat Zimba, Kanjuchi School MKA Club**

“I am an orphan and I lack many basic necessities. I did not know that some people care about me until I got material support from my fellow children in MKA club. I am so grateful to them.”

**Mwayi Sambo, Chitenje School MKA Club**

“Many girls from this school used to go out with sugar daddies at the tobacco auction floors across the road. Some even got pregnant and dropped out of school. Since last year, we have not had this problem, because our MKA club has sensitized school girls as well as the community on the dangers of this practice.”

**A Banda, Headteacher, Chinkhoma School**

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