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MALAWI

FIRST PERSON

Radio Show Helps Youth Pursue Dreams

A popular radio show teaches youth to make wise life decisions

It's 6:40 on a Saturday evening, and Youth Alert! Mix, Malawi's most popular youth radio program, blazes across the airwaves. In a remote area of the country, a young woman is listening.



Photo: Population Services International

Carol Tambala, 18, comes from a poor family from Mtelera village in southern Malawi. At 16 she became pregnant and dropped out of school. For two years, she implored her parents to let her return to school, to no avail. Carol has one ambition in life, to become a nurse, and she knows school is the only way.

"During my prenatal visits I met a lot of nurses and they told me I had to complete my education if I wanted to pursue a career in nursing," she says. "That's why it was painful to see my friends carrying books going to school every morning, knowing that staying at home would take me nowhere."

Carol Tambala stands with her daughter in the village of Mtelera, southern Malawi.

"Now that I am back in school, my goal is to become a nurse one day, and I am working hard to achieve this," said Carol Tambala, a young mother who convinced her parents to let her finish her schooling.

"One evening I was listening to Youth Alert Mix! with my parents, and the presenters were talking about the importance of returning to school after becoming pregnant," she explained. The young mothers featured on the USAID-funded Youth Alert! Mix program managed to continue their studies and attain their goals. This gave Carol courage. It also moved her parents. "The interview with a girl who had gone back to school was touching," Carol's mother recalls. "Soon after the program, we made a decision to allow our daughter to go back to school."

Carol is elated about returning to school: "Now that I am back in school, my goal is to become a nurse one day, and I am working hard to achieve this."

The radio program encourages youth to make good health and life decisions, promoting HIV prevention among young people. As Carol and other listeners tell their peers about the radio show, its audience grows and more youth learn about how to make smart life decisions.

Telling Our Story
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