



SUCCESS STORY

Young Women and Men Join Prevention Efforts to Fight HIV/AIDS

Peer educators in Zambia reach out to and teach young people about HIV/AIDS.



USAID

Jonathan Gondwe, 26, and Miriam Nachamba, 21, are trained peer educators actively involved in identifying young people in schools and communities who are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and teaching them how to avoid the disease.

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As an HIV/AIDS peer educator at the YWCA in Chibombo, Zambia, 21-year-old Miriam Nachamba is well informed and chooses abstinence although she has several friends who are sexually active. “My right time is coming. I don’t want to rush,” Miriam says. “When I was at boarding school, my friends who had boyfriends would tease me that I was not bright, but I have managed to challenge them.”

Her colleague is 26-year-old Jonathan Gondwe, who is married and has a 6-year-old daughter. Young women and men like Miriam and Jonathan are learning the importance of HIV prevention interventions and are gaining the confidence to think and act responsibly about their choices and set goals for their future.

Reaching high-risk adolescent girls and boys with HIV/AIDS prevention messages and services can prove challenging, particularly if they have dropped out of school, are not living with family, or are sexually involved with older people. In Zambia, where a significant number of people aged 15 to 44 engage in high-risk behavior, preventing HIV transmission through abstinence from sexual activity and being faithful to a single partner is a priority.

The International Youth Foundation supports a peer education program under the Empowering Africa’s Young People Initiative, with assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and funding from the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR). The initiative helps Zambians gain knowledge about HIV/AIDS, form values, and develop civic and leadership skills. An equal number of women and men have received training at the Chibombo YWCA, and most of them are committed to the youth program. They are actively involved in identifying young people in schools and communities who are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and teaching them how to avoid the disease.

Like many young women, Miriam too dreams of having a nice home, a husband, and children one day. But for now, she says with a confident smile, she is “100 percent abstaining.”