

## New film initiative tackles youth health, social challenges: Umati

By Correspondent Segini Hamis

IN a groundbreaking effort to address critical social and health issues affecting young people, stakeholders in Tanzania are leveraging the power of film. A new programme, a collaborative initiative between the Family Planning Association of Tanzania (UMATI), an NGO specialising in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and services, and MEMA Africa, aims to educate, empower, and inspire youth to make informed decisions about their lives and well-being. The programme targets pressing challenges such as unsafe abortion, unplanned pregnancies, child marriages, and new HIV infections.

The innovative project, dubbed 'Impakt Sinema,' officially launched last weekend in Dar es Salaam with a special screening of ten short films. Speaking at the event, UMATI executive director Susan Mkanzabi emphasised the program's core objective: ensuring young people have access to accurate information and education. "This access, is crucial for enabling them to make sound decisions regarding their health and to fully participate in pursuing their dreams," she explained.

Mkanzabi highlighted that the decision to use a film-based approach stems from art's undeniable influence. This method is expected to effectively capture the attention of a large youth audience and deliver vital reproductive health education to this significant demographic. "As an institution, we've partnered with MEMA Africa - they're in film, and we specialise in adolescent reproductive health education. We're targeting specific areas of reproductive health and sexuality," Mkanzabi stated.

She further elaborated on the urgent need for such interventions, noting that "young people, although they make up a large proportion of the population, still face numerous reproductive health challenges such as early pregnancies, child marriages, and new HIV infections. It is this group that is most affected," Mkanzabi stressed that the project aims to ensure youth receive accurate information and education through the compelling lessons embedded in these films, empowering them to make informed health decisions.

The 'Impakt Sinema' project plans to strategically reach regions most severely affected by child marriage, teenage pregnancies, and gender-based violence. These target regions include Tabora, Shinyanga, Katavi, and Mwanza. The programme is slated to run for six months, from July to December this year, aiming for a focused and impactful intervention.

Addressing the sensitive issue of abortion, Mkanzabi clarified that the act remains a criminal offense under Tanzanian law. It is only permitted when a woman's life is

in danger, or in specific cases of rape and unplanned pregnancy that could lead to severe injury or life-threatening illnesses. She also urged young people to take full advantage of the free health education services available at various centers, encouraging them to get tested and prioritise their safety. "Youth are the nation of today; you cannot build a country without its youth. I urge all young people to make use of the available reproductive health education centers. These services are free, so don't rely on information from the streets but visit the centers to get correct information," Mkanzabi advised.

Hassan Kiyungi, leader of MEMA Africa, explained that the 'Impakt Sinema' initiative's primary aim is to foster positive social change within the community concerning reproductive health and gender-based violence among young people. Kiyungi noted that film was a medium suggested by young people themselves, anticipating that this approach will attract more youth and ensure wider dissemination of the crucial messages.

"We currently have a project called 'Impakt Cinema'—these are films intended to inspire social change. The main goal of the program is to promote change and encourage young people to take action on issues that affect their daily lives," Kiyungi stated. "Today, we've launched ten films with ten different stories, marking the beginning of continued film screenings in various places—including schools, colleges, and communities at large."

Kiyungi underscored that through this project, both organizations will continue to collaborate closely with the government to achieve their objectives by providing education to a broad spectrum of youth. He believes this will contribute to nurturing a community of competent, ethical, and ambitious young people. "As NGOs, we mostly strive to fulfill the government's set goals through its different departments at district and regional levels, including health and social welfare officers," Kiyungi added.

Abdul Saidi, one of the film participants, expressed his optimism about the project's potential impact. "These days, there are many unplanned pregnancies which bring various challenges to young people unprepared for family responsibilities; sometimes they do due to peer pressure and lack of information," Saidi remarked. "Impakt Cinema" will ensure education and motivation on reproductive health issues reach youth, giving everyone a better understanding."

The launch of 'Impakt Sinema' marks a significant stride in addressing complex youth challenges in Tanzania, leveraging creative storytelling to foster awareness, responsibility, and empowerment among the nation's young generation.



Tanzania Association for Reproductive and Family Health (Umati) executive director Susan Mkanzabi speaks at the launch of a short socially engaged investigative documentary held at Temeke in Dar es Salaam on Friday. Photo: Guardian Correspondent

## Majaliwa in Belarus for key diplomatic four-day visit, boosting economic ties

By Guardian Correspondent, Minsk

PRIME Minister Kassim Majaliwa arrived yesterday in Minsk, Belarus, on Monday for a four-day working visit set to end today.

This landmark engagement signifies a pivotal moment in the bilateral relationship between Tanzania and Belarus, marking the first time such a high-ranking Tanzanian official has visited the Eastern European nation. The visit underscores a concerted effort by both countries to deepen their strategic cooperation across various key sectors.

Upon his arrival at Minsk National Airport, Prime Minister Majaliwa received a warm reception, met by Belarus's Deputy Prime Minister, Viktor Karankevich. The welcoming party also included a distinguished Tanzanian delegation, featuring Zanzibar's Minister of Investment, Sharif Ali Sharif; Tanzania's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, Cosato Chumi; and Tanzania's ambassador to Russia, Fredrick Kibuta, reflecting the high importance placed on this diplomatic mission.

The core objective of this historic visit is to significantly enhance

bilateral ties, with a particular emphasis on vital sectors deemed crucial for national development. These include agriculture, education, health, tourism, investment, trade, and technology transfer. Both the Tanzanian and Belarusian governments are keen to harness this opportunity to foster deeper collaboration, exchange expertise, and unlock new opportunities that will mutually benefit their economies and populations.

During his stay in Minsk, Prime Minister Majaliwa is scheduled to hold official discussions with his Belarusian counterpart, Prime Minister Alexander Turchin. These high-level talks are expected to cover a wide range of topics, from trade facilitation to joint development projects. Beyond inter-governmental dialogues, the prime minister will also engage directly with leaders of various Belarusian companies. These crucial meetings aim to encourage and attract Belarusian enterprises to invest in Tanzania, showcasing the country's conducive investment climate, abundant natural resources, and burgeoning market. Tanzania hopes to secure

commitments that will drive industrial growth and job creation back home.

A significant highlight of the visit will be the signing of several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between Tanzania and Belarus. These agreements are set to formalise cooperation in diverse areas, including political consultations, agriculture, education, and trade. The signing of these MoUs will lay a concrete foundation for future collaborative endeavors, ensuring that the enhanced diplomatic engagement translates into tangible economic and social benefits.

This strategic diplomatic initiative is a critical component of Tanzania's broader foreign policy framework, which prioritises economic diplomacy. By forging stronger ties with Belarus, Tanzania aims to diversify its international partnerships, open up new markets for its products, and secure essential technological transfers. This forward-looking approach is designed to create new avenues for sustainable economic growth and accelerate national development, aligning with Tanzania's vision for a prosperous future.



Patrobas Katambi (C), Deputy Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (Labour, Employment, Youth and Persons with Disabilities), presents a land title deed to the contractor supposed to construct what lined up as a bus terminal and a tarmac road from Nguzonane to Mwanza, where the Shinyanga Regional Referral Hospital is located. The projects are valued at a combined 26bn/-. Right is the contractor, Harson Mchau, and left is Shinyanga municipal director Alexius Kagunze. Photo: Correspondent Marco Maduhu