



STORIES OF CHANGE

Disclaimer

This document presents success stories that were developed with the informed consent of the beneficiaries. All stories have been documented in adherence to standard ethical and protection procedures. Any personal or sensitive information that could compromise the identity, safety, or dignity of the beneficiaries has been carefully omitted.

T a n z A f y a



Dodoma, Tanzania

Dr. Beatrice's story

Trust, Truth and Transformation: Dr. Beatrice Natupu's life-saving work at Mtumba's Vikonje dispensary

In the quiet ward of Mtumba, on the outskirts of Dodoma, the recently concluded TanzAfya project has left behind more than improved statistics. It has left behind stories of resilience, justice, and quiet heroism.

At the centre of one of such stories is Dr. Beatrice Natupu, the Officer in Charge at Vikonje Dispensary, whose work during the project not only protected lives but restored dignity where it had been taken away. Known among young people in the area as a warm and trustworthy professional, Dr. Natupu became a go-to figure for adolescents in need of health advice, counselling, or simply someone who would listen. Her days under the TanzAfya project were filled not only with clinic duties, but with sessions on sexual and reproductive health, teen pregnancy, HIV testing, and family planning. With her calm demeanour and ability to maintain confidentiality, she opened doors for youth who previously had nowhere to turn. But among the many encounters she had, one case stands out as a powerful reminder of how deeply her role mattered.

The story of Bahati (Real name changed privacy)

It was during one of her outreach sessions that she met Bahati, barely thirteen, in Standard Seven. Bahati lived with her younger sibling after her parents had separated years ago. Her father had since relocated to another village and was no longer involved in their lives. Bahati, frightened and withdrawn, revealed to Dr. Natupu that she was pregnant, a result of a relationship with a fellow pupil.

When the boy's mother was informed, instead of showing compassion and support, she turned hostile. She summoned the young girl and instructed her to lie, to tell authorities that the pregnancy was a result of incest, that her biological father had raped her. The father, though completely innocent and absent from the home, was swiftly arrested based on the accusation.

What happened next could only have been made possible through a combination of medical ethics, emotional intelligence, and bravery. Dr. Natupu spent over five hours speaking to the traumatized girl, slowly gaining Bahati's trust. Eventually, the girl felt confident to open up and share the truth, everything she had endured, the manipulation, the fear, and the false accusation. Dr. Natupu recorded^[ST1] her statement in writing and on audio, carefully documenting the girl's confession.

Dr. Natupu then took the evidence to the local village executive officer, although it was too late to find the office open on that evening. She returned early the next day, determined to ensure that Bahati got her justice and the truth would not be buried under pressure and threats. The recordings led to the immediate release of the father and the arrest of the boy's mother, who was later sentenced to six months in prison for obstructing justice. "It was one of the most difficult moments of my career," Dr. Natupu said, reflecting on the ordeal. "But I knew if I didn't act, an innocent man's life would be destroyed, and a young girl would carry a burden that was never hers to bear."

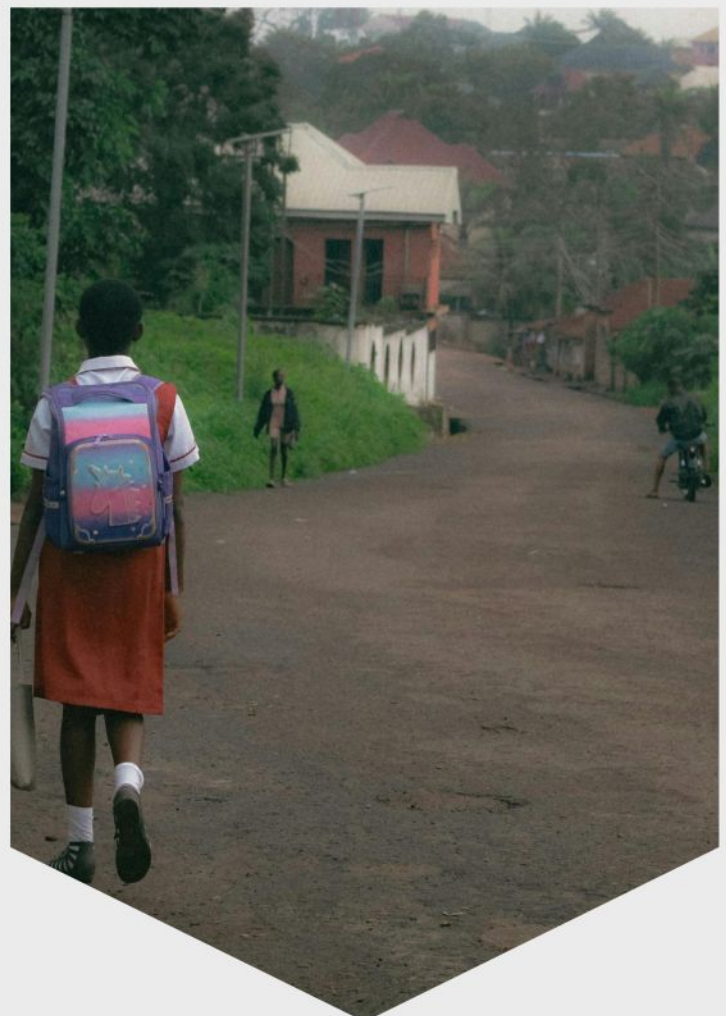
Though Bahati delivered her baby safely, the child tragically passed away from pneumonia shortly after birth. Still, the story did not end in tragedy. With support from TanzAfya peer educator, local leaders and community members, efforts were made to find and contact her father and other relatives who were held responsible to provide support to the child headed family and ensure the girl could return to school and complete her education; a step which Dr. Natupu calls "essential for her healing and future."

The TanzAfya programme, implemented by Médecins Du Monde (Mdm) and its partners, in close collaboration with the Government of Tanzania, had established platforms such as Youth weekend clinics and mobile outreach services, creating spaces where young people felt safe to seek help. Dr. Natupu's dispensary had become a model of what compassionate care could look like, a place where no one was turned away, and every voice mattered.

Looking back on the project's impact, Dr. Natupu remains proud, but clear-eyed about what still needs to be done. "Young people living with disabilities were not reached the way they should have been," she admitted. "And many facilities still don't provide the privacy adolescents deserve. We need centres where everything a young person needs is under one roof, from counselling to treatment.

Despite the challenges, her story stands as a testament to what is possible when trust, compassion, and professional courage come together. "Being there for someone at their lowest moment is what healthcare should be about," she said. "And sometimes, it's not about medicine it's about believing someone and standing up for what's right."

As the TanzAfya sexual and reproductive health programme closed, the legacy it left behind was not just in reports or clinics. It's in memories of people like Dr. Beatrice Natupu, who gave young people in Vikonje not only care; but confidence, hope, and a future worth fighting for. The impact of the project remains in transformed lives of girls like Bahati, who could have discontinued from school if it was not for the champions created by the TanzAfya project.





“Now I’m Free”: Agnes Matonya breaks family planning myths in rural Dodoma

At just 22 years old and a mother of two, Agnes Matonya had long believed that family planning wasn’t for her. Like many women in her village, she grew up surrounded by myths and fear.

“I was told using family planning would destroy my eggs,” she said, her voice calm but reflective. “Even my parents believed it. We didn’t talk about these things, it was just known. You don’t interfere with your fertility (by using modern family planning).”

But everything began to change in March 2025, when the TanzAfya Project reached her village. Through regular public sessions and targeted outreach, Agnes was introduced to comprehensive family planning education. “That’s when I finally understood what it really meant,” she said. “The project helped me realize I had a choice and that it was okay to take control of my body.”

She credits much of her breakthrough to Charles Kenneth, a local peer educator under the project, whose consistent presence in community gatherings left a mark. “Charles would come and teach us during community meetings,” Agnes recalled. “One message that really stuck with me was: ‘Use family planning to build your economic future.’ That was powerful. It changed the way I saw everything.”

Today, Agnes proudly uses a contraception method of her choice, something she once feared. She made the decision in consultation with her husband, who, to her relief, supported her fully. “He agreed without hesitation. That made it easier,” she said. “I chose the injection because I felt it was safe and suitable for me. So far, I’ve had no issues.”



With her newfound confidence, Agnes has also become an informal advocate among her peers. Several friends have followed her advice, including one who is now using the implant method after hearing her story. "I'm proud," Agnes said. "Proud that I now understand family planning, and that I can help others understand it too."

But for Agnes, the journey shouldn't end with education alone. She believes that young people, especially those already involved in health awareness groups, should be given economic empowerment opportunities to secure their future. "Give them capital," she urged. "Even something as small as fruit-selling businesses or other ventures could change their lives."

Her voice is echoed by Charles Kenneth, a peer educator who said the reception to the TanzAfya project among youth in Ndebwe was nothing short of inspiring. "Every week we visited different dispensaries and surrounding communities and spoke with dozens of young people," Charles said. "The turnout was incredible, especially among primary school students. They were curious, open, and eager to learn."

The success of the project in Ndebwe shows just how transformative access to accurate reproductive health information can be impactful particularly in communities where myths and misinformation once stood in the way. "Now, I'm free," Agnes said, a quiet smile spreading across her face. "Free to plan my future, free to raise my children in peace. That's what family planning gave me."

"Even my parents believed it. We didn't talk about these things; it was just known. You don't interfere with your fertility (by using modern family planning)."

AGNES MATONYA



Chamwino, Tanzania

Teacher Magret's story

A Voice for the Voiceless: How teacher Magret Olutu helped her students overcome sexual reproductive health challenges in Chamwino

In a small classroom at Hanet Secondary School, one teacher quietly stepped beyond her job description and into the lives of students who needed far more than academic instruction. Magret Elisa Olutu, a mentor teacher under the TanzAfya Project, became a lifeline to adolescents navigating the difficult realities of sexual reproductive health in silence.

Before the intervention of TanzAfya, many students at Hanet were suffering in the shadows. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were not uncommon, yet students rarely spoke up. "They would hide the symptoms," Magret said. "They didn't have the knowledge or the confidence to talk about what was happening to them. There was so much fear and stigma."

Through the project, Magret was trained to deliver accurate, age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education. The results were immediate. Students began to open up, ask questions, and seek for help. One case in particular has stayed with her.

"In 2024, one of my students, a young girl, was suffering from a chronic STI. She came to me in pain and confused," Magret recalled. "I couldn't turn her away."

Kisa's Story (Name changed for privacy)

Kisa, a seventeen-year-old Form Four student, attended TanzAfya sexual reproductive health sessions at Hanet Secondary School. After two sessions, she realized she was experiencing symptoms that needed urgent attention. She decided to approach Teacher Magret privately. "It was during our routine counseling sessions," Magret recalled, "when Kisa came to the office while I was meeting with other students. She waited patiently outside until they were finished, then entered the room. She looked desperate." Kisa explained that she had symptoms similar to those described by the peer educator during the sexual reproductive health session; symptoms associated with sexually transmitted infections. She said her mother had been buying painkillers from a local drug shop, which only gave her temporary relief, and her condition was getting worse. Knowing the situation couldn't wait for the next TanzAfya outreach visit, Magret quickly referred Kisa to Gema Hospital. The hospital had a healthcare worker trained by TanzAfya who specialized in providing Youth-Friendly Services.

"If we hadn't intervened," Magret said, "I truly believe Kisa's condition would have worsened. But she got the care she needed and now, she's back in school."

"These days, it's not strange to get a phone call from a student or a local youth," Magret said. "They'll say, 'Teacher, I've noticed something wrong with my body. What should I do?' That kind of openness never used to exist."

It is evident that this transformation came from engagement of youths and communities under the TanzAfya interventions. A mobile education bus, fitted with a public announcement system, travelled village to village, broadcasting information about free services. Slowly, the fear began to fade.

Thanks to initiatives such as the weekend clinics under the TanzAfya Project, which created a space where young people could access sexual and reproductive health services discreetly and without shame. These clinics did not only serve students but also engaged entire communities.

But the path has not been without obstacles. Deep-rooted stigma, misinformation, and harmful social norms still linger especially among parents.

"Some parents think helping their children get treatment is the same as exposing family shame," Magret said. "It makes the work harder, but not impossible."

Despite these hurdles, the project delivered more than just knowledge. It distributed essential medical supplies such as condoms and STI detection and treatment, and it created a trusted bridge between healthcare providers, teachers and youths. Most importantly, it equipped champions like Magret with the tools and the heart to stand in the gap when no one else would.

As the TanzAfya Project comes to a close, Magret's message is simple but urgent: "I would love to see these free services for young people continue," she said. "I hope the government and civil society step forward to keep this going. We've made too much progress to stop now."

She also called for youth-friendly service providers to continue inspiring confidence into young people and make them feel seen and heard. "Let's keep educating," Magret urged. "Let's talk openly about risky sexual behaviours. Let's make sure this education never stops."



Dodoma, Tanzania

Teacher Malugu's story

Teacher Malugu: Turning Hell into Hope for a Young Girl at Hombolo Makulu Primary School

Teacher Emmanuel Malugu, a warm-hearted and composed man, serves as a teacher at Hombolo Makulu Primary School in Makulu Ward, Dodoma City. Teacher Malugu considers the TanzAfya project to be special, and he shares a remarkable story of how he identified and rescued a Standard 6 girl from sexual abuse, helping her find safety and restore her hope for life.



Before the TanzAfya project, cases of sexual violence were whispered about in the community but rarely addressed. Many incidents went unnoticed or were quietly resolved within the village. When the project was introduced, Teacher Malugu was selected to attend a one-week sexual reproductive health (SRH) training facilitated by the Ministry of Health. Inspired by the training, he began providing SRH education to his pupils and introduced a suggestion box where students could anonymously share concerns related to SRH issues.

He opened the box twice a week, accompanied by two selected pupils, and soon discovered several cases of gender-based violence. To create a safe space, he organized group discussions with girls and encouraged anyone experiencing sexual abuse to speak with him privately, assuring them of confidentiality and support.

"The next day, Tina (real name changed for privacy) came into the counseling room alone. She looked shy and nervous. She told me that what I had taught them about sexual violence was happening to her at the hands of her biological father. I was shocked. I gently asked her to explain how it started." Recalls teacher Malugu.

Tina shared that her parents had separated due to conflict, leaving her and her two younger sisters in the care of their father. His dad left in the morning and often returned home late. One night, after she had prepared his dinner, he ordered her to sleep in his room. When she resisted, he threatened to kill her if she disobeyed or told anyone. The abuse became routine, and she felt trapped and exhausted.

Teacher Malugu, visibly saddened by the account, provided initial counseling and assured Tina of her safety. He promised to help her and encouraged her to remain open and confident. Following the TanzAfya protocol communicated to teachers, Mr. Malugu reported the case to the head teacher. Together, they referred Tina to the ward social work office. She was escorted to the Social Welfare Office, which immediately involved the ward executive officer and the police.

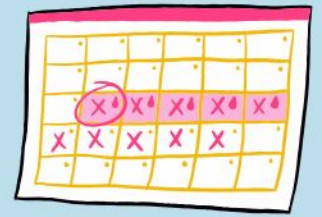
Tina was taken to a health facility for examination, which confirmed the abuse. Her father was arrested and later imprisoned. Tina now lives in a safe environment under the care of social services. The social welfare office has taken responsibility to take care of Tina and her siblings, and she is currently in standard seven in the nearby Primary school. Teacher Malugu is proud of the transformation the TanzAfya project has brought to his school and the surrounding community.

"My support goes beyond the school. I talk to children, neighbors, and friends in the community," he says. The outreach SRH services provided through the cinebus have become widely known in the area, attracting youth from beyond Hombolo Makulu Ward.

Teacher Malugu emphasizes the importance of educating parents to improve communication with their children, who often feel too shy or afraid to speak up. "I've become a friend to the children at school, and now they share many of their challenges with me." Teachers that did not get formally trained have also been engaged and are now actively supporting the campaign against sexual violence and promoting sexual and reproductive health rights. He urges the need to expand interventions introduced by TanzAfya project to cover more schools and communities.



From Stigma to Strength: Firdaus's menstrual health journey at Mtumba Secondary school



In the quiet classrooms of Mtumba Secondary School, a quiet revolution is taking place, one that is empowering girls with knowledge, dignity, and self-confidence. Thanks to the TanzAfya Project, conversations once silenced by shame are now being led with pride and clarity.

Among the many students benefiting from the initiative is Firdaus, who shared how the project changed her life.

"Before the project, we used cloth (during menses) because we didn't have access to sanitary pads," Firdaus said. "But once the TanzAfya project came, we received proper education and learned how to use pads, which were distributed free of charge by the project." She said.

There were no facilities to manage our periods, but now we have private and safe spaces. Many of us used to think that menstruation was a curse, but it's actually a normal health matter."

Firdaus, like many girls in the region, once struggled with the stigma surrounding menstruation, speaks openly about it both at school and at home.



"The teachers supported me a lot," she explained. "Now I can speak without any fear. I can talk to my mother freely and involve her in conversations about my period."

She gave a confident definition when asked what menstruation means to her:

"Menstruation is a monthly cycle that happens to girls and women. It's completely normal and not something to be ashamed of."

Firdaus also shared a touching story of how she helped a classmate who experienced her first period during evening classes:

"One of my friends got her period for the first time while we were in class. I took her to the teacher, and we were given sanitary pads. After that, I accompanied her home and made her understand it was a normal and biological experience for girls and women."

For Firdaus, this experience was not just about helping a friend, it underscored the importance of access to pads and education for every girl.

"I would like the community to continue receiving education about menstruation and for people to abandon harmful traditional beliefs," she urged. "More education should be provided, and schools should be supplied with more pads."

Her sentiments are echoed by Mr. Joseph, a peer educator at Mtumba Secondary School, who believes that menstrual health should no longer be a hidden topic.

"Education must continue to be provided so people understand that menstruation is not something strange," he said. "The government and private institutions must help ensure sanitary pads are available in schools."

The TanzAfya Project is not only improving access to menstrual hygiene products, but also helping to create an environment where young girls like Firdaus feel cared, empowered, and confident.

Through simple but powerful interventions, the project is nurturing a generation that understands its bodies, demands dignity, and leads change.



Photo credits:

Praxis for Health and
Development/Seif Kabelele

**Acknowledgement**

The development of these success stories was undertaken by PRAXIS for Health and Development Ltd., under contract to conduct the TanzAfya End-of-Project Evaluation. We sincerely acknowledge the valuable contributions of project beneficiaries, community representatives, government authorities, and implementing partners, whose cooperation and insights were instrumental in documenting the outcomes and impact of the TanzAfya initiative. Their engagement has been vital in capturing evidence of progress and lessons learned to inform future programming.