

## The story of talented, unique, and devoted young people from Ruiru Kenya.

Am glad to introduce you to a group of young people in Ruiru Kenya which is doing a wonderful work to the community. A group of youngsters i.e. Hillary Mabubi, Ken Mwangi, Paul Mukundi, John Kimani, Allan Ochieng', Roman Nyanjui, Irene Wambui and Ann Gakubu met in year 2000 and joined a group that already existed that was dealing with HIV/AIDS awareness called Ruiru Aids Awareness Group (RAAG).

They volunteered in this organization, where they were using drama to educate the community on different social challenges with more emphasis on HIV/AIDS. At that moment HIV/AIDS prevalence rate was at 34% in Thika district and youths were more infected and affected. In the year 2002 this group met different challenges when implementing a home based care project with Pathfinder International, among them high number of orphans and vulnerable children. At this point they noted that they need to widen their scope and venture on various projects to address different social challenges in the community.

In year 2002 they thought of forming a different organization meant to widen their scope with more emphasis on youth development programs and supporting orphans and vulnerable children.

They agreed to form a group named FOCUS (families orphan and children under stress):- a community based organization registered by ministry of culture and social service Kenya, in the year 2002. It has 30 volunteer

members drawn from Ruiru and its environs where Most of them are artiste and socialists.

FOCUS uses multidimensional channels of communications to promote socio-economic development. FOCUS also runs a simple and sustainable day care centre to care for orphans and vulnerable children and encourage community parenting.

On interview, Founding chairperson Mr. Hillary Mabubi who is a graduate from Kenyatta University says the suffering of orphans and youth missing vital information on HIV/AIDS and indulging in dangerous and risky activities was the driving force to initiate the organization. Most members said they come to the centre to embrace and nurture a smile to children and make sure they get their basic needs. Hillary also was quick to note that life has not been easy especially when they started the organization, he said they used to go and perform in hotels, churches and different public gatherings to raise money to support and help in making sure there is a radiant smile on faces of the children at the centre (FOCUS).

Currently FOCUS is supporting 40 OVCs at the centre and is planning to add the number come year 2007. FOCUS is run and managed by young people aged between 19-30years. These young people are responsible for making sure that orphans get food, clothes, education needs, psychological support, social support, emotional support, health and spiritual support.

FOCUS has very good rapoo with the local leaders, churches and community around who really support them. FOCUS has forwarded proposal to different organization

some has supported them like ST JOHN COMMUNITY CENTRE, PLAN INTERNATIONAL, PSI KENYA AND NACC.

**FOCUS main target is OVCs, youth and community at large in Thika district and it's planning to widen its scope more. When you visit FOCUS you will note it's a very vibrant dedicated devoted talented and unique fraternity. They have very good and artistic presentation addressing on HIV/AIDS and different social challenges.**

**FOCUS also has a dancing troupe that is headed by Martin I saw them dance during 10th December concert dubbed "vipawa pure"** aimed at promoting behavior change and talents where over 1200 youths turned up. They do organize such events quarterly in their calendar of events..... and for real this youngsters are talented. Martin also pointed out that this year they are organizing another show specifically for children to help them explore on discovering their talents. "...am ready and passionately dedicated on helping them nurture mmh their talent" Martin said.

George who is the director of FOCUS creative art emphasized how art is a wonderful tool of communication "it's only through art where a character expresses his or her feelings .....and also is source of living if well managed" George said. He as well proceeded and said "drama tells life the way it is, even what people fear to talk about openly". He actually finished by challenging me to imagine life with no art and so I saw how boring it could be!

**FOCUS**

## **Current**

## **activities**

**FOCUS** is currently involved in the implementation of the following activities to achieve its mission:

- ✚ Vocational training for older OVC.
- ✚ Orphan care and support through community day care centre with currently 30 OVC.
- ✚ Revolving fund for youths & OVCs guardians.
- ✚ Behavior change communication initiative and abstinence promotion for schools in Thika district.
- ✚ Community drama outreaches for awareness, advocacy and sensitization.
- ✚ Puppetry shows.
- ✚ Consultancy and trainings in various fields.

FOCUS has won a lot of awards in previous years because of their outstanding performances. In year 2004 FOCUS won commonwealth youth gold award as the best practice in the common wealth region. This really inspired them and signaled that people appreciate what they do. Due to FOCUS and other organizations effort it's important to note that HIV/AIDS prevalence has dropped from 34% in year 2000 to 11% this year(2006) noted by ministry of health Kenya that is in Thika district.

This year focus has really achieved a lot, they were

able to support 100 big OVCs in vocational training skills and some are already employed. According to FOCUS this is one of their major achievements this year. They were also able to implement projects with PLAN INTERNATIONAL, ST JOHN COMMUNITY CENTRE AND POPULATION SERVICES INTERNATIONAL KENYA .They were also able to produce their theme song titled "*smile of a child*" and they are in the process of making its video.

FOCUS is aiming to be the best organization and being a role model in the community and nation at large especially in making a child smile as thy do believe and I quote..... you cannot change the entire world but you can change the entire world of a child"

*For more on FOCUS previous projects visit [www.nayd.org](http://www.nayd.org) go to kenya segment..*

This is humble request! FOCUS does not have a website we will be very happy and grateful if we someone to develop it for us one, to enable us spread wings to different part of the world..

If you would like to know more about FOCUS make a donation, have an exchange program or volunteer contact us through:

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**DEDICATED TO: FAMILIES ORPHANS AND  
CHILDREN UNDER STRESS (FOCUS) FOR CHARI  
NAYD.**

**MY PROJECT.**