TANZANIA YOUTH SCHOLARS

a YOUTH:WORK program

TANZANIA YOUTH SCHOLARS

Lessons learned and best practices from working with vulnerable youth

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Program Overview

The Tanzania Youth Scholars (TYS) program is a five-year initiative of the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to support vulnerable youth in the transition from school to work. The program's overarching objective was to increase access to quality vocational and entrepreneurship training and secondary education opportunities for 1,800 orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) aged 14–24, along with other support to create economic opportunities for youth.

The OVC designation covers orphans (one or both parents deceased) as well as youth from extremely impoverished families who are not able to cover their costs of education, shelter, food, and medical care. According to a 2009 study by UNICEF, 71 percent of Tanzanian children suffer from two or more severe deprivations of basic needs which can endanger their health, well-being, and long-term development.[1] The Tanzanian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) maintains a database of OVC throughout the country, which is used by the government and non-profit organizations to identify and select beneficiaries for a number of programs, including TYS.

The TYS program had two components: (1) vocational training and job placement services and (2) secondary education. The vocational training component of the program was carried out by the Tanzanian government's Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) and the secondary education component was carried out by the Campaign for Female Education (Camfed), an international non-profit that works in five countries across Africa to support girls' education.

> ***"The program has empowered us to understand that the issue is not to focus on training provision only, but we should also focus on the end result of the training and listen to what employers want."***
>
> – Principal, VETA Tanga

This document describes the program model and highlights key outcomes of TYS, with a focus on several lessons learned through the program. The experiences of the TYS program allow for synthesis of best practices and recommendations for future programs seeking to provide education and employability training that take into account the unique needs and challenges of vulnerable youth.

TYS in a Snapshot

- **1,826 scholarships to OVC**
  - 1,526 received vocational training
  - 300 attended secondary school
- **68 education institutions engaged**
  - 8 VETA training centers in 7 districts
  - 60 secondary schools in 3 districts
- **89% graduation rate**
  - 1,390 OVC graduated vocational training
  - 231 OVC girls graduated secondary school

[1] *UNICEF, "Childhood Poverty in Tanzania: Deprivations and Disparities in Child Well-Being," 2009.* *http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Tanzania_FinalChildPovertyStudy.pdf*.

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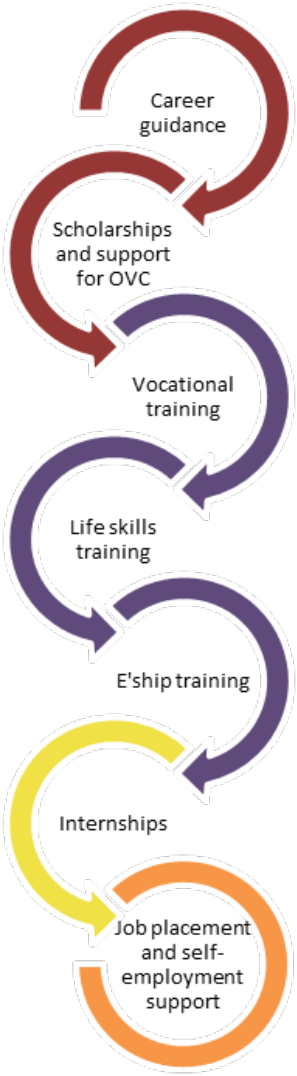
Vocational Training and Job Placement Services Component

The vocational training component of the TYS program was implemented by seven government-run VETA centers and one Focal Development College (also under the VETA system) across the country. Through short (three to six months) and long (two to three years) training programs at the VETA centers, TYS provided training to 1,526 vulnerable youth. In addition to the vocational courses, beneficiaries received employability and entrepreneurship services in line with IYF's comprehensive, integrated model. Life skills and entrepreneurship skills were woven together with education in a vocational trade during the training sessions. The holistic support package included:

> ***"I used to hang out with bad company, but after entering the program and learning life skills, I stopped and focused on learning and improving my future."***
>
> – Tausi, VETA short-course graduate, started her own business cooking and selling breakfast



Career guidance: VETA staff worked with youth who were selected to apply for the training program to understand their interests and career goals, and assisted them to select the most relevant vocational training course.

Financial support: The TYS program provided financial support covering training fees, transportation to and from the training center, and housing at the centers' dormitories for trainees who lived far away. Matrons and patrons at these dormitories provided psychosocial support and monitored young people's wellbeing.

Vocational training: Trainees participated in short or long training programs according to the path selected during the career guidance process. The vocational courses offered were selected to align with the needs of the local labor market and included plumbing, carpentry, electrical installation, tailoring, food production, motor vehicle mechanics, welding, hospitality, agriculture, and masonry.

Life skills: IYF staff evaluated the life skills course that VETA centers already offered to participants in the long training programs, provided capacity building to improve the life skills courses where necessary, and added reproductive health topics from IYF's Planning for Life curriculum. TYS also ensured that life skills classes were extended to trainees in the short training programs.

Entrepreneurship training: All participants in both short and long training programs received entrepreneurship training using the existing VETA curriculum, which covered topics such as the characteristics of an entrepreneur, how to design a business plan, financing and customer care, and keeping track of profits and losses.

Internships: Participants were placed in eight-week internships as a part of their VETA training program. This provided the trainees with the opportunity to put the skills they had acquired into practice and gain real-life work experience. Internships were secured with a wide range of companies including Serena Hotel, Serengeti Breweries, and Dangote Cement Company.

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Job placement services: VETA center staff worked to provide all trainees with job placement support upon completion of their training. The job placement services assisted youth in gaining job readiness skills, provided support in searching for employment, and connected them to existing employment opportunities.

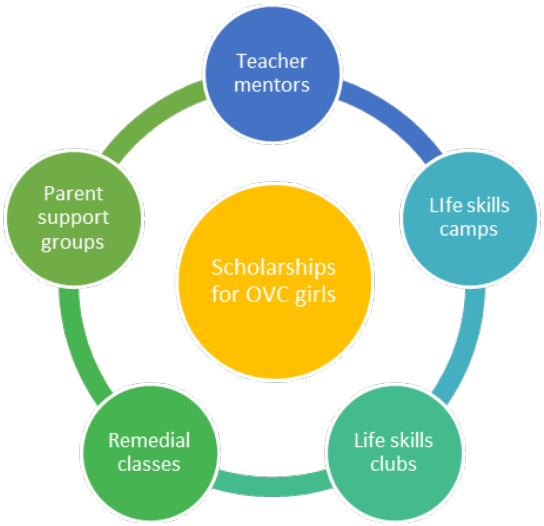
Self-employment toolkits: Because self-employment was often the most viable option in many sectors of the local economy, TYS provided additional support to beneficiaries pursuing this option in the form of entrepreneurship "toolkits." Upon completing their training course, youth could form small groups and apply for an in-kind award of the tools needed for their selected trade (e.g., plumbing or food processing) to kick-start their income-generating venture.

Moving up the Ladder

Charles completed a three-month internship at Isamillo Lodge in the city of Mwanza, learning and performing job functions in all areas of the hotel, including reception, laundry, and housekeeping. The hotel's General Manager was so impressed with his dependability, customer service skills, and ability to express himself that she hired him on as a full-time employee immediately after he completed his internship. Charles started as a Laundry Attendant and was quickly promoted to Assistant Supervisor of the department.

Educational Component

The educational component of the TYS program was implemented by Camfed and provided secondary education to a cohort of 300 vulnerable girls, beginning in January 2012 and graduating in November 2015, in three rural districts. IYF and Camfed provided a package of critical financial, educational, and psychosocial support to ensure students' academic success. This package included:



Scholarships: Each girl received financial support to cover school fees, uniforms, and all necessary school supplies. The scholarship was 15,000 Tanzanian Shillings per term. The funding was disbursed to the school and expenses were paid directly by the teacher mentors (*see more information on teacher mentors in the next paragraph*). For those living far away from the school and unable to travel home every day, or living in challenging circumstances, lodging at a hostel close to the school was provided.

Assistance through teacher mentors: At each school, one teacher (usually female) was selected based on his or her ability to work with and relate to vulnerable youth and designated as a "teacher mentor" for the TYS students. This teacher provided psychosocial support to the students, managed purchasing and distribution of beneficiaries' uniforms and school supplies, monitored their progress, followed up with any girls who stopped attending school, and led the school's life skills club (*see below*).

Life skills camps: Twice during the program period, all beneficiaries and their teacher mentors attended a three-day workshop where they received training in life skills, using a curriculum that was based on VETA's life skills curriculum, Camfed's My Better World curriculum, and the IYF-developed Planning for Life curriculum, which integrates youth reproductive health and family planning topics into

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a broader life skills curriculum. The students were then asked to bring the training back to their schools in order to establish a life skills club.

Life skills clubs: Each TYS-supported school established a life skills club that met weekly. The club was led by TYS beneficiaries but was open to all students at the school. Club leaders conducted peer education using the life skills lessons they had learned at the camps. Some clubs took on projects such as cleaning health centers and planting trees, or launched small-scale income-generating activities at their schools to support OVC, especially fellow students at risk of dropping out, by purchasing school materials for them.

Parent support groups: Camfed staff organized parents at the schools to provide financial and in-kind support for school meals so that all students received a hot meal during the school day. This support included the creation of income-generating activities by parents and planting of small gardens that provided food for the schools. The parents' groups also worked together to track students at risk of dropping out and encourage them to stay in school, as well as advocated for students' safety and security.

Remedial classes: TYS provided additional funding for remedial classes, which took place for 1–2 hours at the end of each school day and were open to all students at the school, in order to assist program beneficiaries who needed extra instruction to succeed in secondary-level coursework and pass the national exams at the end of Form II and Form IV.

> ***"We really appreciate the support from Camfed and IYF, because without it the schools wouldn't have been able to stand on their own and so many girls wouldn't have made it to secondary school."***
>
> – Principal, Mlanzi Secondary School, Rufiji

Best Practices and Recommendations

The lessons learned through implementation of the TYS program provide valuable insight into best practices surrounding employability and education for vulnerable youth populations, both in Tanzania and elsewhere. The challenges faced by OVC go beyond those of typical youth cohorts—including extreme poverty, stigmatization, difficult family situations, and social and emotional challenges—and addressing these special circumstances is critical for a program targeting these youth to succeed. The recommendations below are based on the TYS experience and represent best practices for working with OVC.

1. **Provide support services that respond to OVC needs:** OVC face daunting challenges (academic, financial, emotional, and social), which place significant stress on their ability to complete educational or training programs. Program staff must recognize that some OVC are heads of household with dependents to support—or lack a supportive and safe family environment—and anticipate that these issues may lead to difficulties in their training. Female beneficiaries are particularly vulnerable for a myriad of reasons including the risk of pregnancy, after which they are often not allowed to continue their education, as well as sexual harassment in school or at internships and job interviews. Hence, starting at the program design stage, implementing organizations must develop and put in place strategies that respond to the specific needs of the vulnerable youth they are targeting. In addition, when working with youth under 18, organizations should create a child protection policy that considers potential threats to vulnerable young people and states how they will be addressed within the program.

   Additional support services beyond what would be offered in a traditional employability program must be provided to overcome the barriers faced by OVC. Specific program elements were included in TYS to respond to the needs of OVC, including transportation stipends, psychological counseling, housing near the school or training center when necessary, and remedial education classes. Many

VETA staff had not previously worked with OVC, and through this program gained important skills for supporting this population. It is important that some staff have counseling experience and/or that individuals with psychosocial expertise are hired to provide this critical support. In addition to these tangible services, program staff must create a supportive environment for youth by engaging family members, teachers, employers, and others in the community. It is essential that training partners are aware of the existing services and support structures for OVC in their area, and link youth to these service providers.

2. **Recognize and address the issue of dropout:** One particular manifestation of the challenges faced by OVC is heightened rates of program dropout. Due to their vulnerable status, many OVC do not receive the family support necessary to succeed in school or training, and additionally may be under significant financial stress, needing to earn an income to support themselves and their family members. Teenage pregnancy is a significant issue among female OVC; students who become pregnant almost invariably are forced to quit school, often to get married. In the TYS program, several approaches were used in the secondary schools to address the dropout challenge. First, remedial classes were instituted in recognition of the fact that many program beneficiaries were significantly behind their grade level, and low academic performance was pushing many to consider dropping out. Second, the financial support of scholarships and travel stipends eased the financial burden of attending school, and the psychosocial support and follow-up of teachers and other mentors allowed potential dropouts to be identified and averted. Third, the life skills component played a major role in encouraging girls to stay in school and VETA trainees to continue their programs. Many TYS beneficiaries specifically mentioned the self-confidence and healthy decision-making skills gained through life skills training as key reasons for their personal and professional success. In addition, the Planning for Life curriculum covers reproductive health content that helps to combat risky sexual behavior and teenage pregnancy. With these approaches, the program was able to significantly reduce the dropout rate over time.

Key Program Accomplishments

- 89% graduation rate across the two components
- 81% showed knowledge gains in life skills and reproductive health
- 79% placed in internships
- 63% of 2015 graduates were working after six months
- 90% job satisfaction rate for all working graduates

3. **Implement a comprehensive and integrated approach for training:** A holistic package that goes beyond traditional classroom education is required for youth to succeed. This is particularly the case with OVC, who may lack key skills necessary for personal and professional success or the network and knowledge needed to find employment. There must be enough time dedicated to incorporate all components, which may necessitate revising the length of training. For organizations that have not offered these services before, it may be necessary to hire new staff that can focus exclusively on a task such as providing internships and job placements, or data collection and follow-up with youth, since asking existing teachers or trainers to do this work on top of their existing responsibilities is often unrealistic. If instructors are asked to take on new roles, such as providing career guidance or psychosocial support to their students, they must be provided with the necessary training and support to do so with expertise. However, organizations should also consider partnering with other institutions that already offer some of these services to maximize resources and expertise.

The key components of this integrated approach include:

- **Career guidance:** Supporting youth, particularly those with little knowledge of the world of work, to understand the options available to them and select the most appropriate, is an often-neglected aspect of vocational training programs. In the VETA component of TYS, career

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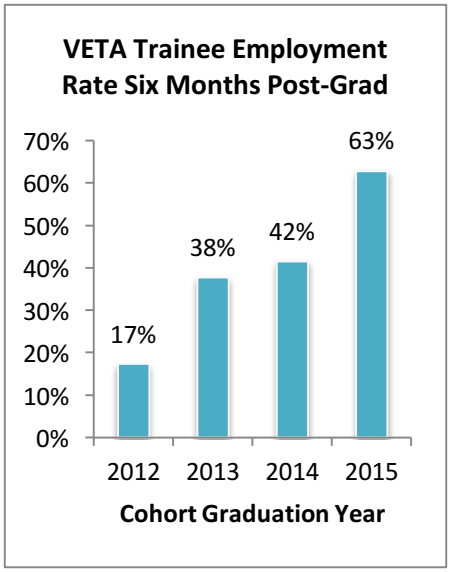
guidance—prior to starting a training program—was an extremely important step to ensure that the vocational area selected corresponded to participants' interests and the youth met the necessary prerequisites. This contributed to improving retention.

- **Life skills:** Whether in secondary education or vocational training centers, life skills are a crucial component for youth to gain self-confidence, leadership, decision-making, and a host of other skills necessary for success in academics and in future careers. Life skills training is an important complement to the "hard" skills provided through technical training, as it provides many of the "soft" skills (such as time management, teamwork, and conflict resolution) that employers deem most important when hiring new employees. Inclusion of reproductive health content in the life skills curriculum is also important for vulnerable adolescents who may be more at risk for early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STI). Finally, life skills must be delivered using a participatory and youth-centered methodology.

- **Training courses aligned with the local job market:** Vocational training centers often cover a fixed set of courses, regardless of how well these align with employment opportunities for graduating youth. Training centers must reach out to local employers and explore sectors with employment opportunities in order to choose their training topics; this is reflected in IYF's "dual-client approach" that treats both youth and employers as key stakeholders in program design. In the TYS program, VETA centers were encouraged to offer vocational courses in areas that were closely tied to opportunities in the local economy.

- **Internships:** Integrating an internship component into a training program is essential to expose youth to professional environments and create relationships that can lead to long-term employment. In the case of TYS, because training courses were tied to the needs of the labor market, trainees were able to secure internships at local companies and gain valuable work experience outside the classroom. Many trainees built networks for future employment through their internships, with a number even staying on in full-time paid positions at the same company after finishing their internship.

- **Job placement services:** Upon completion of training courses, it is crucial that vocational centers provide formal job placement support and maintain contact with trainees for several months after graduation. IYF built VETA staff capacity to provide improved job placement support, such as following up after training completion to refer program graduates to open job opportunities. TYS experienced increasing employment rates over the course of the program, as emphasis on job placement activities increased (*see graph*).



- **Entrepreneurship training:** Given the low absorptive capacity of the labor market in many areas, it is essential for training providers to also encourage exploration of entrepreneurship as a career path for trainees who are not able to secure or are not interested in finding formal employment. TYS beneficiaries were approximately 50 percent more likely to be self-employed than hold a salaried job after graduation, showing the importance of this option for youth. Vocational courses should include training and support for self-employment. Bringing in successful youth

entrepreneurs from the community to share their experiences with trainees and act as role models can be a successful approach. For OVC who lack the financial capital to launch their own small business, it is important to provide cash or in-kind support for self-employment (*see below*).

4. **Use interactive methodology:** As with all education and training, it is essential that interactive training techniques are utilized in these programs. A student-centered methodology is especially vital for engaging OVC, but many teachers and trainers are more familiar with rote learning techniques. To maximize retention of the training material and successfully involve youth in the learning process, teachers and trainers must recognize varying learning styles, engage students and trainees by contextualizing the content and varying delivery methods, and use participatory and experiential methodologies. At VETA, entrepreneurship trainers utilized group projects with simulated businesses, which trainees reported as being particularly beneficial and applicable after their graduation. Life skills courses are also a good opportunity to introduce an interactive, activity-based pedagogical approach.

5. **Provide entrepreneurship "toolkits":** As previously discussed, self-employment is often the most viable option for youth entering the local labor market, but at the same time OVC are likely to lack the start-up capital and other resources needed to venture into entrepreneurship. To address this dilemma, the TYS program adopted the approach of providing "toolkit" awards for youth completing training who intended to start their own business. Youth were asked to form small groups and develop a simple business plan, and selected groups were given in-kind support through tools necessary for their trade that the VETA center purchased. Toolkits varied in value depending on needs and business plans, but cost approximately $300-400. Over the course of the program, 72 groups of 392 youth were awarded toolkits.

6. **Partner with the public and private sectors to link youth to services and opportunities:** Youth benefit the most from programs that engage a wide variety of stakeholders and draw on their contributions. These linkages are all the more important when working with vulnerable youth; a range of stakeholders must work together to meet the unique and critical needs of OVC and ensure they are linked with service providers as needed. Public sector buy-in is important to ensure that the program is coordinated with government objectives for vulnerable youth and participants have access to other government and NGO benefits. In the case of TYS, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare was engaged in selecting beneficiaries from its nationwide database of OVC, and social welfare officers at the district level were involved in guiding program implementation. The VETA training centers were also part of the public sector, run by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, but had not previously worked with OVC populations or interfaced with the Social Welfare department before; IYF was able to act as a key intermediary in building this relationship. At the same time, private sector companies are crucial partners in providing sites for internship placements and in hiring program graduates. Understanding the human resource needs of local businesses—treating employers as a "client" of the program, alongside youth—is essential to ensure that skills learned in training are matched with the needs of the job market.

> ***"Entrepreneurship training enabled me to discover that self-employment is possible and has a lot of prospects."***
>
> *– Abdul, VETA short-course graduate, started his own business selling fish*

7. **Use data to track beneficiary progress and improve program approaches:** Regularly collecting and analyzing data over the course of the program is critical to make well-informed management and programmatic decisions. It also allows program staff to track youth over the course

of the training and job placement process in order to ensure the best possible outcomes. Continuing to track youth after program completion can be difficult, but is critically important given the length of time it can take for young people to secure employment. Lastly, being able to report data also allows for program successes to be shared with stakeholders in a credible manner.

Conclusion: Working Together for Vulnerable Youth

The TYS program was a valuable opportunity to adapt IYF's integrated model to the specific needs and challenges of the OVC population. A holistic perspective that integrates formal education or training with a suite of support services is important for any youth employability program, but the experience of TYS shows that it is even more important when working with vulnerable youth. A careful consideration of the many barriers facing OVC—including lack of financial resources, difficult family situations, interrupted education, and sexual harassment of girls—is also essential for programs to succeed in reaching this population. By drawing on the strengths of private and public sector partners and advocating for the needs of vulnerable youth, TYS was able to improve outcomes for more than 1,800 Tanzanian young people.

Through secondary education, vocational training, life skills, psychosocial support, and entrepreneurship, the TYS program empowered youth to discover their potential, develop goals, and work to improve their lives. In many cases, program staff and the beneficiaries themselves reported a true transformation and a more positive attitude towards life as a result of their participation. Increased self-confidence and personal decision-making skills, as well as tangible hard and soft skills to move forward professionally, allowed OVC to change their perception of themselves and their place in the community.

More broadly, the TYS program allowed implementing partners the chance to refine and strengthen their model for working with vulnerable youth. Throughout the program, IYF worked closely with Camfed and VETA to improve their portfolio of existing services, as well as offer new ones specifically tailored to OVC, ultimately creating stronger institutional capacity to serve this population. TYS has allowed IYF to develop lasting partnerships with VETA and Camfed, and contributed to the design of a new program, *Via: Pathways to Work*, which will be implemented in collaboration with VETA and another partner organization, and in partnership with The MasterCard Foundation. This new program, in line with the vision of TYS, aims to sustain and scale delivery of market-responsive training and support services that will enable 22,550 young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to contribute towards and benefit from economic growth.

> ***"The TYS program has played a vital role in helping young people who had desperately lost hope for their future.... The youth who graduated from training are now capable of working and earning income to meet their basic needs and support their families."***
>
> *– Victor Nyenza, Social Welfare Officer, Songea*

Even more than other young people, OVC need support in building sustainable livelihoods within a challenging environment; they must be equipped with the tools to navigate their personal and professional lives. A well-designed and sensitive program that follows the best practices outlined above can ensure improved wellbeing and confidence for OVC, as well as build the capacity and expertise of service providers to work with this important population.

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SUCCESS STORIES

A New Boss

Christopher has gone from just getting by to being a leader in the workplace. Raised by a single mother whose only income came from selling fruit, Christopher grew up under difficult circumstances. He sold water and took odd jobs at building sites to help support his two siblings and earn money to cover the costs of attending primary and secondary schools. After secondary school, Christopher worked as a day laborer until he heard about the TYS scholarship opportunity through a ward executive officer and successfully applied, selecting the masonry course because he had enjoyed his experience working at building sites.

Christopher made sure he gained more than just masonry skills. He also benefitted from the life skills lessons, noting that he appreciated learning about STIs, early pregnancies, and prevention. He has become knowledgeable about taking care of his body. "I have become very sensitive about STIs and I always take good care of myself because I don't want to get infected," says Christopher.

He had the opportunity to put his training into practice during an internship at the Mbeya Municipal Building and Construction Department, where he gained essential experience working with people from different backgrounds and was soon put in a position to supervise others. Through the entrepreneurship classes, he gained the confidence and skills to be self-employed and start his own business after graduating from VETA Mbeya in September 2014.

Christopher is now receiving masonry work from multiple clients and is even supervising his own employees: "They now call me boss," he says. A true entrepreneur, he has also started two pig farms for additional income. Since starting to earn an income, he has been able to rent a house and support his family.

Vailet Takes the Lead

Vailet and her younger sister went to live with their grandmother in Iringa after their parents separated. Despite working to pay her own school fees, Vailet was struggling to afford school in Form I. One of her teachers took note of her circumstances and recommended Vailet for a Camfed sponsorship.

With counseling from her teacher mentor and participation in remedial classes, Vailet began to realize her potential and succeed academically. By the end of Form IV, Vailet was among the top five students in her school. She also became the chairperson of her school's life skills club, assisting her peers with various projects, such as a fundraiser that helped students to buy food and sanitary napkins.

Vailet is proud of her leadership role, which has enabled her to encourage and help her fellow students build their self-confidence, succeed in their studies, and avoid engaging in negative behaviors. The life skills club at Vailet's school has motivated several of her classmates, who were at risk of dropping out completely, to regularly attend school and the club.

Having graduated, Vailet is a Camfed alumni member in her district. She will soon become a peer educator and has been selected to conduct literacy training for Form I students in Iringa schools. As a teacher, Vailet says she hopes to be "confident, respectful, and self-aware" for her students.

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ENGAGING LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR YOUTH SUCCESS

The labor market in Tanzania is challenging—both for youth embarking on their first job experience and for employers looking to fill positions with qualified and reliable staff. Employers like Aramex, a rapidly growing logistics, transportation, and shipping company in Dar es Salaam, understand the challenges of finding good workers. Jane Njagi, Head of Human Resources and Training Director at Aramex during the project, stressed the importance of soft skills in prospective employees: "Communication and being able to express yourself are crucial. Just having a certificate won't get you hired these days." Ms. Njagi knew exactly what she needed in her entry-level employees: teamwork, integrity, customer service, professionalism, business etiquette, and the ability to learn on the job.

In 2013, IYF staff worked with Ms. Njagi to create internship opportunities for youth in the TYS training program at Aramex. The internships were an excellent introduction to the world of work: Aramex provided interns with ID cards and uniforms, which gave them confidence when representing the company and interacting with customers. Aramex also held weekly trainings on professionalism, workplace protocols, and communication skills, and helped interns develop a CV at the end of their internship. When asked if Aramex would hire more VETA trainees, Ms. Njagi responded, "Definitely, this is a long-term initiative. TYS interns are more organized, more committed, and more presentable than others."

Ms. Njagi was so pleased with the partnership and her TYS recruits that she became more actively engaged in the program, mentoring VETA trainees on interviewing skills and holding several informational sessions at the VETA center in Dar es Salaam to educate trainees (and staff) about what employers look for in terms of qualifications, resumes, and interviews, as well as expectations on the job and workplace protocol once they are hired. For many TYS youth, these information sessions were the first time they had the opportunity to connect directly with a human resources director and get practical advice.

By the end of the program, Aramex had taken on six TYS interns and hired three of them for full-time employment. The story of this partnership demonstrates how vocational training programs that work closely with employers are truly a win-win situation.

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