

Press Release

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Radio Tanzania's "Twende na Wakati" Starts a New Season on July 3

"Twende na Wakati" (Let's Go with the Times) is one of the longest running soap operas using entertainment to educate and change people's behavior in dealing with health issues. Since 1993, this weekly half hour program, has been engaging a large national audience with dramatic, entertaining and informative stories on ways to improve reproductive health and prevent HIV/AIDS. The new season starts on Tuesday July 3 at 8:30 pm just after the evening news.

The new season will follow well-known characters and themes. Kibuyu Mkwaju is currently the most popular character in the series. He is a comic villain. A real bad guy that the public loves because of all the mischief and trouble he gets into.

Luvi is another very popular character. She is a tragic figure; a young woman forced into a marriage that would never work, who turned to prostitution out of poverty and desperation. It was during this time that she was infected with HIV. Luvi's story is about how she leaves town and moves back to live with her parents in the village.

The third storyline will focus on Baba and Mama Luvi, Luvi's parents. Baba Luvi will struggle with coming to grips with his daughter's condition. Both will need to overcome stigma and offer care and support for their daughter.

With technical and financial support from the United States Government through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Radio Tanzania will be broadcasting 52 new

weekly episodes. Each episode is broadcast twice in a week with the repeat broadcast at 8:30 pm on Saturday.

The program is broadcast on Radio Tanzania's national network as well as three other stations which ensure the widest coverage especially in rural areas. The program has a large rural following since Radio Tanzania is one of the only radio stations that can cover all of Tanzania.

A large-scale multi-year evaluation of the program, published in 1999, concluded that "Twende na Wakati" was successful in changing peoples' behavior. The new season will build on the success of previous seasons.

PEPFAR's technical and financial support to Radio Tanzania is through a new project called Strategic Radio Communication for Development (STRADCOM). This project will provide on-going technical assistance in script design and development, while the experienced Radio Tanzania team will continue being responsible for the production requirements of the program.

The series will deal in a dramatic fashion with the issues of testing for HIV, treatment, stigma and prevention.

"We are happy to support programs such as 'Twende na Wakati' that have a vast audience and the ability to inform people about health issues such as HIV/AIDS in an engaging and compelling way," said Pamela White, USAID Tanzania director. "We believe that radio can play a vital role in helping change people's behavior so that we can defeat HIV/AIDS in Tanzania."