



March 26, 2014



Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Virginia M. Blaser (left) presents the 2014 Tanzanian Woman of Courage award upon Community Health and Gender-Based Violence Activist Joyce Stephano Nyembe

On March 26, Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Virginia M. Blaser bestowed the 2014 Tanzanian Woman of Courage award upon Community Health and Gender-Based Violence Activist Joyce Stephano Nyembe during a ceremony at the United States Chief of Mission's residence in Dar es Salaam. Ms. Nyembe was honored for her perseverance and leadership fighting for the rights of women and children, and especially those living with HIV and AIDS, and victims of gender-based violence. She becomes the eighth recipient

of the Tanzanian Woman of Courage Award since the U.S. Embassy began this recognition in 2008.

In her remarks, Chargé Blaser lauded Ms. Nyembe's advocacy on behalf of women and children in her community in Mwanza, noting that, "Joyce Nyembe is a survivor; a woman who inspires others in her community to speak out and to fight against culturally accepted but socially damaging norms . . . as a survivor of domestic violence, Joyce understands the devastating impact of domestic violence and how commonly accepted violence against women is in her community. Yet, she refused to be defined or limited by statistics, titles, or her situation. And that takes courage."

As a survivor of gender-based violence and a woman living with HIV, Ms. Nyembe has shared her status publicly while emphasizing that "people living with HIV and



Women's Rights Organization

Nyamhongolo Area, Plot No 5, Buswelu.

P.O. Box 11348, Mwanza, Tanzania

Mob: 0754 367484

Mail: admin@kivulinitz.org : Web: www.kivulinitz.org

AIDS should not be ashamed." She understands the devastating impacts of domestic violence and the complacency surrounding gender-based violence in Tanzanian society. Due to her personal knowledge of the challenges facing those in her community, Ms. Nyembe has been able to find solutions for the benefit of all, such as reducing the stigma towards people living with HIV and AIDS, and providing educational and economic empowerment training to women and youth.

In her award acceptance remarks, Ms. Nyembe said that, "I am extremely fortunate and humbled, as a mother of modest means, to stand before you today recognized by the United States Embassy as the Tanzanian 2014 Woman of Courage . . . I want to express my sincerest appreciation and pride in being honored with this award on behalf of those I serve in my community. Receiving the Woman of Courage award has given me motivation to continue the fight to eliminate gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS, and tuberculosis infections in women."

Joyce Stephano Nyembe began her movement to defend the rights of women and children more than 12 years ago upon completing her standard seven education. She began offering literacy classes to adults in a standard three class, especially women. Her educational classes became so well-known and her students performed so well in their national exams, that she was awarded a government certificate as the Best Adult Education Teacher in Tanzania. As Ms. Nyembe realized her passion and talent for teaching within the community, she engaged deeper into community service. Through the NGO Kivulini Women's Rights Organization based in Mwanza, Ms. Nyembe shifted her focus from literacy to addressing health and social issues to further elevate the status of women and girls in society.

In the past few years, Ms. Nyembe has emerged as a well-known community health activist, both in Dar es Salaam and in Mwanza, advocating for the prevention of HIV infection, as well as the reduction of stigma for those Tanzanians living with HIV or AIDS. In addition to her local activism, she also has been involved in an international movement of change, entitled "We Can" to prevent domestic violence. She has also spoken out on an international scale through radio, newspaper articles, television spots, and documentaries such as the "Raising Voices SASA" film.



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Since 2008, U.S. Embassy Dar es Salaam has recognized Tanzanian Woman of Courage for their efforts to promote women's rights. Previous Tanzanian Women of Courage recipients include the Honorable Fatma Abdulhabib Fereji, Minister of State at the First Vice President's Office, Zanzibar Government of National Unity; and Ndinini Kimesera Sikar, Director of the Maasai Women's Development Organization (2013); High Court Justice Joaquine De-Mello (2012); Maimuna Kanyamala, Executive Director and founder of Kivulini Women's Rights Organization in Mwanza (2011); Ananilea Nkya, Executive Director of the Tanzania Media Women Association (2010); Anna Kilango Malecela, Member of Parliament for Same East Constituency, Kilimanjaro Region (2009); and Helen Kijo-Bisimba, Executive Director of the Legal and Human Rights Center (2008).

The Tanzanian Woman of Courage annual award is bestowed on woman who has shown exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for women's rights and advancement.