

20th June, 2010. Koforidua,
Eastern Region, Ghana.

JICA AND SONY PUBLIC VIEWING IN KOFORIDUA: FOOTBALL AGAINST HIV & AIDS

On Saturday, 19th June, 2010, the Ghana-Australia match was shown live on a giant screen at the Appenteng Hall in Koforidua, Eastern Region of Ghana, where teeming number of people gathered to support the Ghana Black Stars. Dignitaries such as Nana Kwame Opong-Owusu III, Jumapohene, Deputy Eastern Regional Minister, Baba Jamal, JICA Resident Representative, Mr. Kunihiro Yamauchi, Sony Representative, Mr. Takuya Numata, Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana representative, Mr. Albert Martey, Popular Ghanaian musician and HIV/AIDS Advocate, Screwface, Mr. Ernest Asamoah, Municipal Chief Executive and many others, graced the event.

The Eastern Region of Ghana has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the country. Mr. Kitazawa, a renowned Japanese footballer who was present at the occasion, advised youth against acts that will spread HIV/AIDS.

In his official statement, Baba Jamal, the Deputy Regional Minister cautioned youths against the act of unprotected sex. He advocated that abstinence is the best option. He also encouraged them to use their youthfulness wisely by engaging in profitable ventures like education.

Mr. Kunihiro Yamauchi, the Resident Representative of JICA in his speech, highlighted that the event was aimed at reducing new HIV infection among young people through a wide range of fun and educative activities. According to him, ‘...these activities equip young people with knowledge and skills and motivate them to make informed decisions and take actions to lead healthy lives, whether living with HIV or not.’

Mr. Takuya Numata of Sony, in a statement read on his behalf, expressed Sony’s commitment to providing excellent world-class entertainment to majority of people around the world irrespective of where they are located. He thanked JICA and other partners for providing the platform for Sony to positively affect the lives of many Ghanaians. He appreciated the warm reception Ghanaians offered the entire Sony team from Japan.

The Jumapohene, Nana Kwame Opong-Owusu, paramount chief of the area, thanked JICA and Sony for organising the event in his locality. He praised the good partnership and friendliness between Ghana and Japan. He also cautioned youths against waywardness and advised that they should endeavour to test and know their HIV status so that they are better informed on how to lead a healthier and longer life.

The Programmes Manager of the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana, PPAG, Mr. Albert Martey also thanked JICA for providing the avenue for people in Koforidua to be freely counselled and tested to know their HIV/AIDS status. He opined that the exercise would go a long way to help reduce the high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in the region.

Alex Agyemang, an 18-year old boy who attended the event said; ‘The programme is very good and I wish they organise it daily. I have tested and I know my HIV status. I know I have to be very careful with girls. I also enjoyed watching the match on a big screen. I have never seen a big screen as big as this before.’

Other educational and recreational activities such as drama, football competition and peer counselling were integrated into the event and Ghana AIDS Commission and the Ghana Health Services supported the exercise with the distribution of condoms and free HIV/AIDS confidential counselling and testing.

Currently, eighty-six (86) volunteers from the Japan Overseas Cooperation Agency, JOCVs, are working all over Ghana including those organising event. Most of them live in remote communities where there is no access to necessities of life such as potable water or electricity. Until now, one thousand and eighty six (1,086) Japanese have been dispatched to Ghana as volunteers in areas such as HIV/AIDS control, infectious disease control, public health, nursing, nutrition, community development, teaching, handicraft, engineering, fashion designing and others.

According to some of the volunteers, Ghana is a peaceful and hospitable country, but the challenges in terms of development are enormous. They said their activities which are dotted across the country, will help in Ghana's quest to attain its developmental goals.

The JICA and Sony Public Viewing in Ghana: Football against HIV/AIDS is being organised in 18 separate locations around the country such as: Akosombo, Dodowa, Bekwai, Tepa, Koforidua, Kumasi, Kade, Mpraeso, Tamale, Agona Swedru, New Abirem, Savelugu, Ajumako and others.