

TanzMED: Increasing access to health information for better decision-making

BACKGROUND

HIV is one of the leading causes of death in Tanzania (CDC) affecting 780,000 women (UNAIDS). Adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) are at a higher risk for dying from HIV compared to other demographic groups. Although many initiatives exist to fight disease in Tanzania, many people lack proper knowledge and easy access to information. As a result, people rely on limited and/or outdated information when making health-related decisions. Even for those who already know about their health issues, it can be difficult to access medical information. Government ministries and NGOs are generating a lot of data, but much of the data is project-specific and cannot be easily utilized by society.

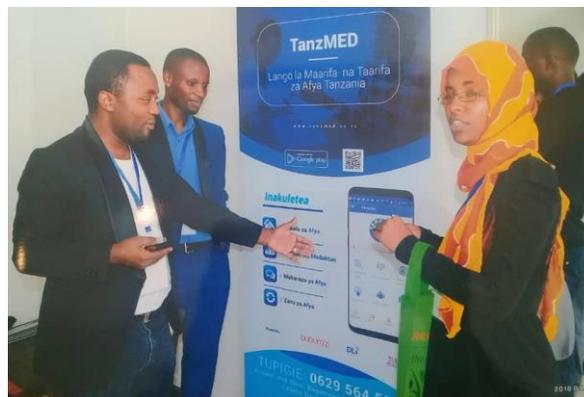


Photo Credit: TanzMED Team

PROBLEM

For many AGYW, knowledge and access to correct health information is a challenge. There is a need for quality health information to increase male partner participation in creating a safe environment for AGYW; prevent AGYW against risks of getting HIV/AIDS and other STDs; and create new sources of income and employment for local health workers.

SOLUTION

TanzMED is a platform available online and offline that provides information about HIV/AIDS and medical services. With this platform, visitors can read health-related articles written by medical specialists, access medical-related information (e.g., nearby health facilities) with predefined filters, receive direct consultation from a specialist, and access different tools (e.g. medication reminder, menstrual management and tracker, baby clinic management, HIV knowledge, and more). Also, to help AGYW, male partners should be involved in health-related decisions, so TanzMED aims to engage men on different levels. For example, linking men to their female partner's menstrual tracker can help them decide together when to get pregnant. Male partners can also access information about HIV/AIDS and other diseases from TanzMED's articles to help protect AGYW from HIV infection.

PROCESS

We started researching user needs by meeting with different stakeholders: AGYW, male partners, medical specialists, and government authorities. Our aim was to understand how our solution could best serve all these groups. For example, we wanted to know how much users trust physician advice received online versus in person. We found that users prefer

online tools because of their simplicity and flexibility. We also found that most AGYW in the urban Temeke District own a smart phone and can afford to pay an average of Tsh 5000/= for private medical advice from TanzMed's physician network. We also discovered that different stakeholders have different needs. We had to balance between policymakers, doctors and everyday users. For example, doctors need simple and undemanding tools, while users need quick replies. Meanwhile, the government wants to make sure its guidelines are followed. We therefore hired a public health specialist to serve as a bridge and review content before it is posted. After following the government processes, we received a recognition letter from Ministry of Health that TanzMed can proceed with our educational efforts.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS



As our aim was to increase data access, TanzMED has made up to 1,400 health facilities easily accessible. These facilities were previously available both online and offline in Ministry of Health or Pharmacy Council archives, but few people were aware of the information. We incorporated the facility data into TanzMED, enabling users to find facility details like specialties, accepted insurance, contacts, and location. Users can also make an appointment via TanzMED. More than 500 visitors use our site daily, where they can access more than 240 health articles in the Swahili language. TanzMED appears on Google as the first hit for all health-related searches in Tanzania. On top of these successes, we have integrated child clinical data. Now more than 100 male partners are connected to Toto Clinic, where they can access child growth data and participate in their children's healthcare.

KEY COLLABORATORS



Mkata Nyoni, ITIL, MSc and his team has received a \$25,000 grant and mentoring from the Data for Local Impact Innovation Challenge (DLIIC) to drive their project. The DLI grant provided TanzMED with sufficient financial capital to implement their idea. The DLI team also provided connections to relevant stakeholders and good business mentorship in shaping the product for future business sustainability. Learn more about TanzMED at www.tanzmed.co.tz or download TanzMED on Android <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.dudumizi.tanzmedtz>.

DLIIC aims to engage, support, and connect Tanzanian innovators, developers, and solution providers to each other and to opportunities to make a difference in people's lives. To learn more, visit <http://www.dliinnovationchallenge.or.tz>.

