

## Infoshule School Attendance Tracker

Connecting parents to their children's education

### BACKGROUND

For every additional year that a girl stays in secondary school, her risk of contracting HIV is reduced by one third. In Tanzania, however, thousands of female students are dropping out of school each year, despite government policies, interventions, and commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals. Part of the problem is a lack of parental involvement in their daughters' education. Students whose parents are actively involved in their education are more likely to attend school regularly, take advanced classes, and excel academically. They are also more likely to graduate from high school and attend post-secondary school and tend to have better social skills and fewer behavioral problems. Schools also benefit when parents are involved in their children's education. Research indicates that parent involvement contributes to higher quality education, higher standardized test scores, and more effective academic programs.



Photo Credit: Vitalis Kihinja

### PROBLEM

Although parental involvement is an important contributing factor to keeping children in school, parents do not always know when their children are missing school because there is no easy way for them to access attendance records.

### SOLUTION

As a software developer and young entrepreneur, Wilson Mnyabwilo wants to use data and information technology to encourage parental involvement in children's education in order to reduce truancy and school dropouts among Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW). His mobile application, Infoshule, allows low income parents to track their children's daily school attendance, even without an internet connection. Infoshule also provides a powerful, cloud-based solution for schools and higher education institutions to reduce staff workload and improve efficiency through an automated time and attendance system. The system can analyze student absences, help set targets for improvement, identify functional solutions, and help administrators assess progress towards improved school attendance and reduced dropouts.

## PROCESS

In a survey of four secondary schools in Zanzibar conducted as part of a root cause analysis for school dropouts, the team discovered that attendance and academic records of students were not kept in a shareable format. Knowing the importance of parental and community involvement in preventing dropouts, the team began to develop Infoshule, with the aim to increase data transparency for parents and the complementary goal of providing quality aggregated data to decision-makers. Teachers use Infoshule to mark attendance and record grades through the web and Android applications. Using a basic feature phone, parents can then access this cloud-hosted information to track their children's attendance and view their grades, class timetable, and school calendar. Infoshule also allows parents to pay school fees using mobile payments. It includes teachers' contact information and school SMS notification to parents and terminal reports. Through this, parents can track in real-time their children's attendance and performance, which will help them support their children's education.

Infoshule has already been implemented in mainland Tanzania in 20 schools in Lindi, Dodoma, and Mwanza. Through a partnership with the Ministry of Education, Infoshule is in the process of being implemented in Zanzibar with a pilot in 25 schools, including 20 government schools in both rural and urban areas and 5 private schools.

## OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Infoshule is intended to increase parents' awareness of their children's school attendance and performance in order to reduce school dropouts and, in turn, reduce the risk of HIV infection that is associated with dropping out of school. Infoshule alerts parents when their children are absent from school, helping them to intervene quickly in problematic situations. By providing an academic progress report, Infoshule also keeps parents well informed about their children's academic journey, replacing the traditional paper report forms, which children can forge or hide from their parents.

## KEY COLLABORATORS

Wilson Mnyabwilo is a Dodoma University student and CEO of Bwilotech Co. Ltd. His own experience dropping out of school has driven him to make innovative tools that prevent other students from dropping out. Wilson and his team received a grant of USD 25,000 from the Data for Local Impact Innovation Challenge (DLIIC), along with technical support and mentorship.

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>.

