

Radio sparks meaningful dialog and awareness about sexual health for young women in Tanzania

In rural communities at high risk of HIV/AIDS, citizens tune into a new radio show, *Thamani ya Binti* (“Value of a Girl”), which uses data about sexual and reproductive health to catalyze discussion and raise awareness.

BACKGROUND

According to government statistics, Tanzanian female teenagers are on average three times more likely than their peers globally to get pregnant,¹ leading many to drop out of school. In Mbeya Region, home to several districts flagged by PEPFAR for high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy and gender-based violence compound this issue and leave many young women at high risk of testing positive for HIV—or of not being tested at all.

PROBLEM

Throughout 2017, the Data Zetu team visited communities in Temeke, Mbeya and Kyela Districts to listen to their priority challenges, or “pain points”. At these Listening Campaigns, which focused on issues related to economic growth, health, and gender, challenges related to gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health (SRH), including early marriage and teen pregnancy were among the most discussed.²

This community data—that is, information produced by citizens that highlighted the challenges faced by their young women across these three districts—emphasized the need to spark meaningful dialog about the severity and scope of these issues. But data about GBV or SRH, alarming as it may be, is not easily accessible to people, particularly in rural areas like Mbeya and Kyela Districts. This makes it hard to use evidence as a catalyst for dialog, advocacy, and support.

SOLUTION

Data Zetu partner Tanzania Bora Initiative (TBI) created a weekly radio show targeted for young women called *Themana Ya Binti* (“Value of a Girl”). The show addresses one issue a week, each one about challenge raised in the Listening Campaigns, which highlights data about an issue communicated through drama.

According to our [own data](#) collected at Listening Campaigns across Tanzania and [published openly online](#), radio is the most popular source of information in rural districts, so by using radio to convey data related to sexual health—and by doing so through storytelling in rural

¹ <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN1NN07T-OZATP>

² See www.bit.ly/dzinsights

areas familiar with that method of communication—the show reaches young women and men where they already are.

PROCESS

After digesting details about the issues pertaining to SRH and GBV raised at the Data Zetu Listening Campaigns, a team of creatives at TBI started making radio show scripts that incorporated datasets, found from official and news sources in Tanzania, creating twenty four episodes that each includes a dramatic element and a “data chat”, where information about the issue in question is covered.

While the show was in production, partnerships were secured with Mbeya Highlands FM and Kyela FM—two of the most popular radio stations in Mbeya region—and the show began airing in July 2018. After it airs, each fifteen-minute episode is also [available online](#) to reach a broader audience.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

Thamana ya Binti spurred an evidence-based discussion between citizens in rural communities about priority issues that matter to them. With 8 episodes still to go (and another season already planned), **citizens in Kyela and Mbeya District are already calling in during the show to express their opinions on the data-informed topics of the day:**

“I advise parents to always look after their children if they come late from school. On their way home, girls face a lot of challenges and therefore if parents don’t carefully look after them, they will lose their children to HIV.”—Lydia, phoning into Mbeya Highland FM after Episode 13 (It’s No Longer Cool: HIV/AIDS Infections).

“Anyone who commits violence against women should be jailed for 30 years.”—Mwampyate from Kyela District, in a message texted to Kyela FM.

At Kyela FM, which covers the most rural area where Data Zetu works, over 250 SMS messages have been sent in by listeners, where they give their opinion on the topics—at an average of one message for every minute of the episode. Radio is proving to be a way for data about issues that matter to people to be made more accessible and relevant to them, sparking meaningful dialog and awareness about adolescent health challenges facing so many young women in rural Tanzania.

KEY COLLABORATORS



DCLI, a partnership between MCC and PEPFAR is enabling the use of data for better policies, programs, greater accountability and progress towards sustainable development goals.