Data Zetu

Fostering data-informed decision making in local communities across Tanzania

IREX

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Women vote on community challenges at a "Listening Campaign" in Temeke, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania—one of the continent's fastest-growing unplanned urban areas.

How can we help local communities and leaders **value** and **use** data to make informed decisions?

Data Zetu ("our data" in Swahili) supports local organizations with **skills** and **tools** to engage with the information that defines their priorities, investments, and decisions.

As a result, these collaborators equip the people and communities they serve with better **health**, **economic growth**, **governance**, and **gender equalty** outcomes.
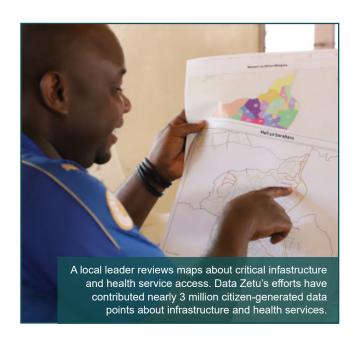
Why is it important to use data to inform our decisions?

Vibrant information catalyzes civic engagement, meaningful discourse, and good governance. Access to reliable data and fact-based sources plays an important role in tracking progress towards sustainable development.

But in many communities, *access* to information is not enough. **Data needs to be made relevant, accessible, and actionable** for everyday citizens, community leaders, and governments to make meaningful decisions.

Data Zetu's efforts to achieve this vision concentrate in **three districts across Tanzania**, with a focus on strengthening data-informed decision making in priority sectors including sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and economic growth.

Investments in building "data confidence", however, are sector agnostic. **Sustainable development cannot be achieved without these data literacy skills**.

A local leader reviews maps about critical infastructure and health service access. Data Zetu's efforts have contributed nearly 3 million citizen-generated data points about infrastructure and health services.

What have we learned?

Embrace today's young leaders. We've partnered with YALI Fellows, the School of Data, and other stakeholders to build a network of youth data ambassadors who are leveraging data for action in their communities.

Start with the problem. To inform our activities, Data Zetu convenes hyperlocal community meetups to surface "pain points" that everyday Tanzanians face.

Foster ownership of data. Instead of extracting data from these communities, our Shareback Sessions work with them to distill, analyze, and understand that information, so that they're more confident engaging with data and better equipped to take action.

Workshops led by Data Fellows help build skills to access, clean, and visualize data.

Be open. The data we collect is published openly for others to use, and the digital tools we develop, to help visualize information or make it more accessible, are designed for anyone to re-purpose in other contexts.

What have we achieved?

Building data confidence

79% of hundreds of organization representatives reported an increase in their confidence with engaging with data to inform their decisions.

Each training participant in turn trains **almost ten others** on these skills.

Fostering responsive governance
Thousands of community priorities are published online as open data.

In rural Tanzania, a local government leader **built a new medicine store** after this data showed her citizens' concerns about low medicine supply.

Making data meaningful

Data murals make information about community priorities accessible.

After encountering a data mural, **92%** of viewers increase their belief that evidence is important to help them make decisions.

To secure a sustainable future, Data Zetu is integrating into the Tanzania dLab, a local NGO that promotes innovation and data literacy through a premier center of excellence. Learn more at www.dlab.or.tz.

For more information, visit **www.datazetu.or.tz**, and contact Dara Lipton at **dlipton@irex.org**.

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