Using a data mural to fight drug abuse in Dar es Salaam

In one of Tanzania's communities most affected by HIV/AIDS, graffiti artists use data to connect people who use drugs with support services.

BACKGROUND

WACHATA Crew is a one of the most popular graffiti groups in Dar es Salaam that advocates for change in the community. For more than ten years, they have worked with local musicians to develop messages on different issues that face the society.

A series of community meetups conducted by Data Zetu in 2017, called Listening Campaigns, convened hundreds of Temeke District residents who prioritized drug abuse as a major community challenge.[1] Drug users, and injection drug users specifically, shoulder a heavy HIV burden, meaning that drug use is playing a big part in the HIV/AIDS prevalence that makes Temeke a PEPFAR DREAMS priority district.

WACHATA Crew is one of Tanzania's most popular graffiti groups. Photo Credit: WACHATA Crew
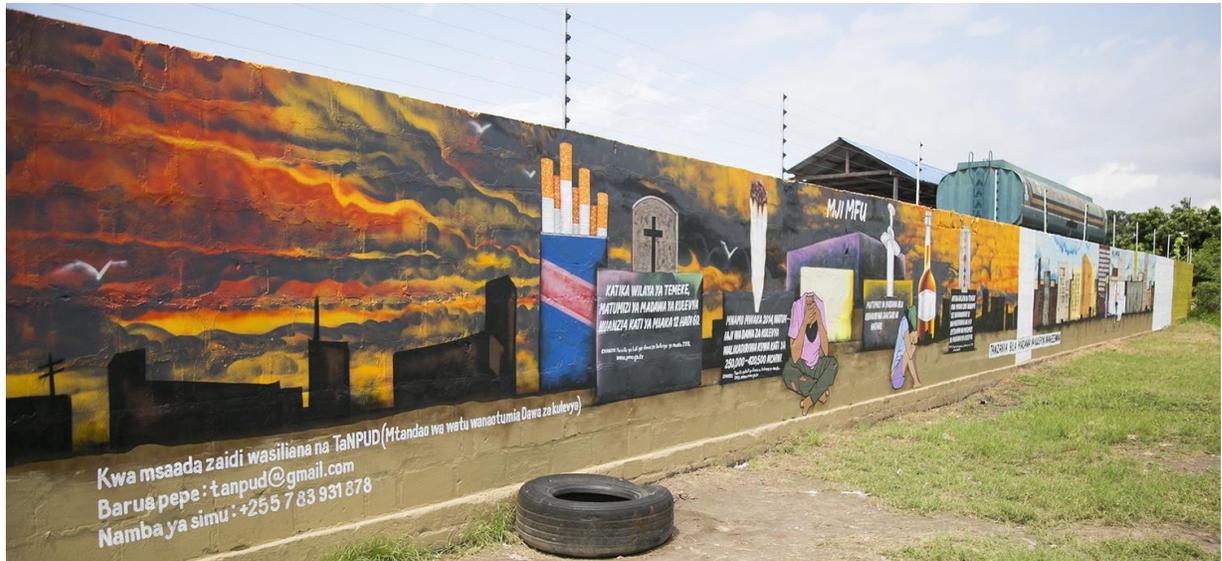
PROBLEM

For more than a decade WACHATA have been trying to find a way to affect change in the community by confronting and visualizing the challenges that face the community. Although they've previously done some graffiti work in places that drug users frequently went to, they felt the message was not fully hitting home, and it was hard to measure the impact of these efforts.

SOLUTION

To test ways that data could help amplify their message to Tanzanians, WACHATA produced a "data mural", giving Tanzanians a better and more effective way of understanding the depth of the issue of drugs in their neighborhood.[2] This mural portrays a creative story about the promise of a drug-free Tanzania, as well as contact information for local resources to seek assistance, such as a helpline hosted by the Tanzania Network of People who Use Drugs (TANPUD).

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[1] https://medium.com/data-zetu/we-dont-collect-data-we-borrow-it-a7ce7a25408a

[2] See www.datamurals.org

Photo Credit: TBI Production team

A wall mural in Temeke District contrasts a drug-riddle city in despair (left side) against a drug-free Tanzania. Text embedded in the mural shows data about the extent of drug abuse in the area. Photo Credit: TBI production team.

PROCESS

This mural process began by understanding the community priorities in Temeke through a series of Listening Campaigns, which elevated drug abuse as a major challenge linked with weak education, safety, and health outcomes.

WACHATA Crew received a data training from TBI about artistic data visualization, citing examples from other data murals all across the world. To complement the Listening Campaign data with official statistics, they also explored data, from a 2016 drug report by the Office of the Commissioner of Drugs Tanzania, about cases of drug abuse in Temeke. These statistics were incorporated into a mural that tells a story about the promise of a drug-free Tanzania.

The mural itself was painted on a wall in Buza Temeke, a ward that has been strongly hit by the problem of drug abuse, in an area of heavy foot traffic.

In addition to driving viewers to TANPUD's resources, the team added a link to Hurumap, a digital tool that makes health data accessible. PEPFAR statistics are included in Hurumap,[3] enabling users to layer PEPFAR data over datasets like population and education facilities.

Photo Credit: TBI Production team

To kickstart the mural's launch, the TBI team hosted a public concert in collaboration with a Temeke-based hip-hop group KINASA, whose artists produced and performed a data-

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[3] https://tanzania.hurumap.org/

informed song about drug abuse. This concert drew the attention of around a hundred Temeke residents and was preceded by a round-table with around 20 drug users.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

Launched only recently in May 2018, the data mural has various strategies to evaluate its reach and understand how it is shaping perceptions of drug use and the value of data to underscore community challenges. Below are some early indicators, with more expected in the coming months:

A public concert launches the drug mural. Photo credit: TBI production team

- **Changing perceptions about data**: Before and during the concert mural launch, the Data Zetu team interviewed 74 passersby. After reading the mural:
  - 91% of respondents reported an increase in their belief that data is relevant to their day-to-day work.
  - 92% of respondents reported an increase in their belief that data is important to set and establish goals.
  - 94% of respondents reported an increase in their belief that data is important to inform their decisions.
- **Insights about gender and data:** The surveys revealed that women were more likely than men to report a *greater* increase in each of the parameters above.
- **Seeking more data-related information**: In the month since painting the Data Zetu website onto the data mural, more people have visited the website than have visited in any month in the previous year.
- **Seeking services and support for drug abuse**: The team will follow up with TANPUD after 12 weeks to learn whether the mural's launch coincides with or leads to an increase in calls, texts, or emails to TANPUD's support services.

This data mural is one of several that TBI will develop. They will soon start rolling them out in Mbeya and Kyela districts - two other priority DREAMS districts - based on pain points related to HIV/AIDS identified in the Listening Campaigns that took place there.

KEY COLLABORATORS

Tanzanibora INITIATIVE	TaNPUD	DATA ZETU	WACHATA Crew