



Iku Lazaro, Co-Founder
of Shule Direct

TRANSFORMING ACCESS TO EDUCATION THROUGH INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Shule Direct uses technologies to improve access to learning content for secondary school students and teachers in Tanzania

Education has the power to transform lives. Equipped with skills, knowledge and confidence, educated children have the potential to lift themselves out of poverty and reach their full capacity. Yet problems such as under-resourcing, poor infrastructure and low levels of attendance, particularly at the secondary level, have meant that Tanzania has struggled to make its vision of 'education for all' a reality.

HDIF is assisting this ambition by working with innovators to improve and extend access and learning for young Tanzanians

in primary, secondary and tertiary education. One example is Shule Direct, a not-for-profit social enterprise providing local and accessible digital learning content for young learners across Tanzania and Africa.

Shule Co-Founder Iku Lazaro is an advocate for the role that technology and innovation can play in transforming the potential of disadvantaged young people in Tanzania, in particular girls and young women. Following a career building communication infrastructures for the telecoms industry, Iku was keen to see how she could use the

"We are on the verge of a breakthrough in education in Tanzania. Our users are pioneers of a new frontier."

Iku Lazaro

vast opportunities provided by communications and ICT to solve social issues. Inspired by her experiences, Iku helped set up Shule Direct as a way of developing innovative ICT tools that can create social impact – tools such as *Makini SMS* – a mobile learning platform that provides students and teachers with access to locally designed digital learning resources.

With an expanding mobile network in Tanzania, *Makini SMS* aims to reach the most marginalised students in the most destitute areas of the country. The innovation is also working to address some of the pertinent problems of under-resourced schools by infusing e-learning and mobile-learning as a supplement to classroom teaching. Shule Direct works with the best teachers in Tanzania in the country to create digitised notes, tutorials, quizzes and multimedia content for 11 subjects following the Tanzanian National Curriculum for Ordinary Level Secondary School. To date, there are 57,063 MAKINI SMS subscribers and 24,636 students using an offline desktop version in 34 secondary schools.

Iku is committed to showcasing the contributions that women make to Tanzanian society and finding ways to encourage more women to get involved in innovation and technology. “We need women role models in every industry and to create platforms and networking opportunities for young girls to meet and access these role models. We (men and women) must first recognise that each individual has a unique talent that is required for our development as a people and that of our society. Our society must embrace people for their abilities, not for their gender.”

HDIF and Shule Direct

HDIF provided funding to Shule Direct to launch Makini SMS. With Makini SMS subscription, students can ask academic questions and get real-time responses from teachers through the ‘Ask Ticha Kidevu’ feature.

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About HDIF

The **Human Development Innovation Fund (HDIF)** is a £39m United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) innovation programme in Tanzania managed by a Palladium-led consortium with KPMG, Newcastle University (EG West Centre), Loughborough University (WEDC), and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

HDIF seeks to accelerate the experimentation, commercialisation, and diffusion of innovations in health, education, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

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