



BUNI HUB

Maryam Mgonja, Hub Co-Manager,
Buni Hub

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN INNOVATION

Buni Divaz encourages women's participation in ICT and tech entrepreneurship

Innovations that place women and girls at the centre of their design have the potential to empower them, deepen their agency, promote their voices, and support them to be a part of change at individual, family and community levels. Yet in spite of the growing body of evidence of its power to transform women's lives, active participation and leadership by women and girls in innovation-related activities remains low.

Leaders of innovation spaces thriving in Tanzania are remarking that while they are testing out some approaches to get more women to participate, they do not fully know how to attract women to these ventures and perhaps do not fully understand the challenges women face in joining them.

Through its partnership with COSTECH, HDIF provides funding support to Buni Hub, an innovation space which fosters innovation and technology entrepreneurship. Buni Hub encourages more women to participate and take a more active role in the hub through creating working cultures and environments that support and nurture women. By considering the attitudes and behaviours that have often resulted in excluding women, Buni Hub is helping to carve out a place for women in a sector dominated by men and make their voices heard.

Meet Maryam Mgonja. Maryam is a coach, facilitator and mentor at Buni Hub, overseeing events, partnerships and public

"We started Buni Divaz as a chapter specifically for women to discuss our inclusion in matters around innovation that impact the society."
Maryam Mgonja

relations. Maryam noticed that despite there being other women like her working in tech, they would rarely participate in the Hub's capacity building and mentoring support activities. In response, she co-founded Buni Divaz, a community that encourages women's participation in ICT and tech entrepreneurship.

By responding to the specific needs of women innovators in Tanzania, Buni Divaz highlights the efforts of girls and women in technology development and raises their profile as pioneers of innovation – women such as Lulu Ameir, whose vending machine 'Be A Lady' supplies sanitary pads in public schools at a more affordable price. Buni Divaz also provides business mentoring and support and keeps members connected through Whatsapp and Facebook groups which help them share opportunities with each other.

Maryam believes that both women and men should equally serve as role models and work together in order to find opportunities and innovations that meet the needs of Tanzania's communities. At the same time, she sees a role for a specific programme

for women innovators so they can discuss issues affecting them directly.

Buni Divaz ambition is to create a network of female volunteer mentors, who are passionate about motivating others to be part of the technology innovation ecosystem in the country.

HDIF and Buni Innovation

HDIF is working with the Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) to strengthen the Tanzanian innovation ecosystem by supporting innovation hubs, starting with Buni, a technology Hub based at COSTECH that was set up in 2011 with support from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland through their project TANZICT. Buni Hub aims to foster innovation, technology and entrepreneurship through capacity building, mentoring programmes and community empowerment. HDIF is carrying out research to gather insights on the hub landscape in Tanzania. Through this, HDIF seeks to support COSTECH to achieve its vision to transform Buni Hub into a flagship hub which acts as both a showcase and a support mechanism to other innovation spaces, hubs, and labs in Tanzania.

"We want to create champions who will be responsible in nurturing other women towards the change and inclusion we are all looking for."

Maryam Mgonja

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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