

A group of people, including a woman and a baby, looking at a screen. The woman is in the foreground, looking intently at the screen. The baby is in the center, looking directly at the camera. The background shows other people, including a woman in a purple patterned top and another woman in a white top. The overall scene suggests a training or educational session.

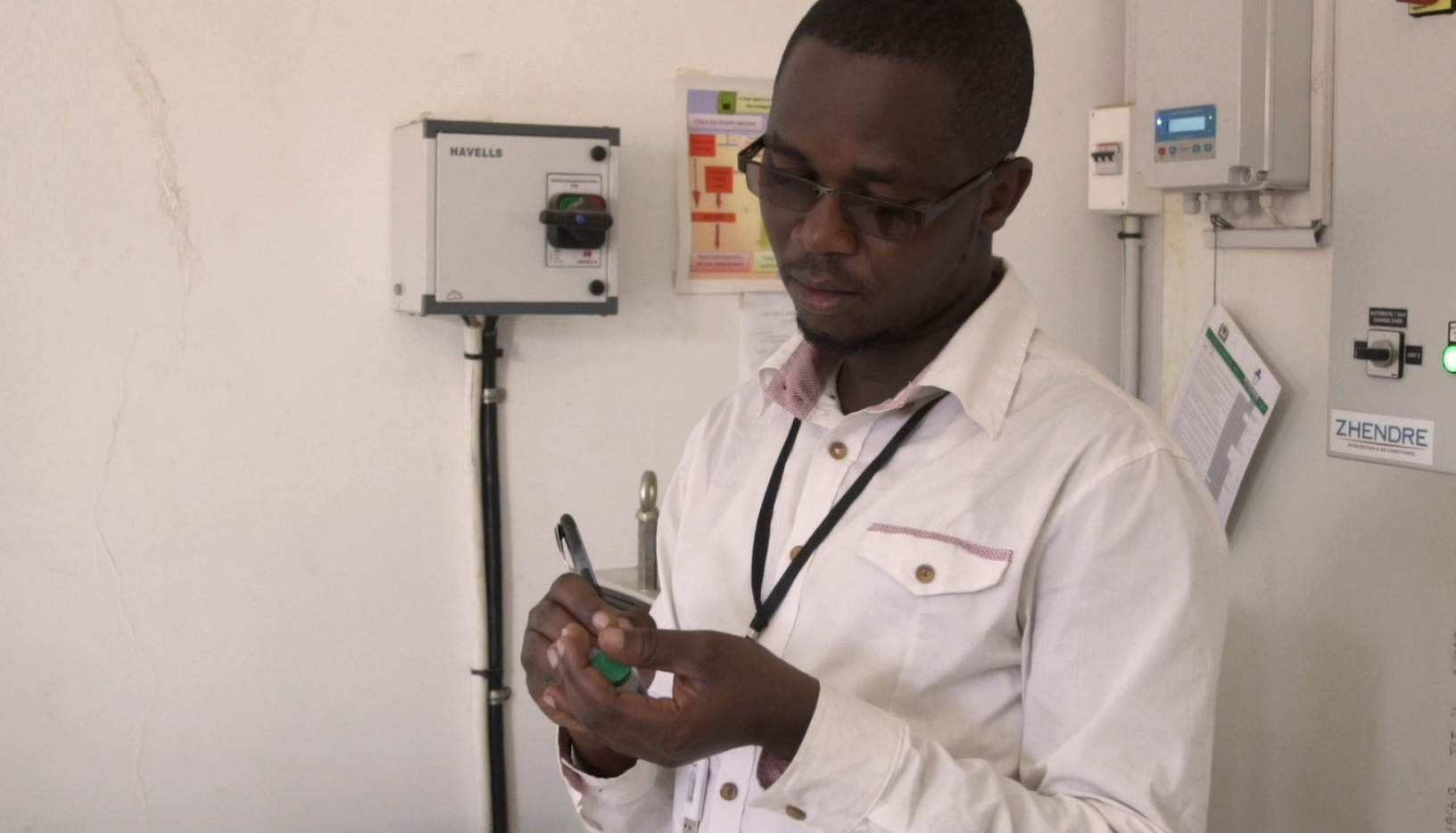
The YouTube of Immunization

A Life-Saving Approach to Global Health Training

Transforming primary care with future-forward training programs.



The BCL Institute
for Learning in Global Health



Mid-Level Managers (MLM) training program: Just-in-time support for workers in the field

District EPI Manager Alan Rushokana oversees immunization programs at dozens of rural clinics in Arusha District, Tanzania. One of his most important tasks is ensuring that frontline health workers have the skills they need to effectively carry out crucial immunization tasks: maintaining the cold chain to keep vaccines at an effective temperature; calculating coverage and dropout rates; performing community outreach to teach mothers the importance of immunizing their children.

Rushokana's greatest ally in in-service training is a three-year-old video training platform, Immunization Academy.

Built with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the platform provides short video lessons that Rushokana can download and share with the xx workers spread across xx clinics in Arusha District.

While straightforward, this training tool represents a life-saving shift in immunization training delivery: accessible lessons that provide just-in-time support for workers in the field, who previously relied upon dense, text-based WHO manuals, infrequent live trainings, or no training at all.

A Training Landscape Ripe for Disruption

For decades, the global health world focused on access to lifesaving vaccines for low-income countries. If countries had access to immunization, then rates of tuberculosis, malaria and other virus-borne diseases would drop.

But even as funding for vaccination initiatives increased, rates of immunization remain low throughout sub-Saharan Africa, with two million children dying each year from vaccine preventable diseases. One of the greatest barriers to vaccination coverage is human capital: there's an acute deficit of trained middle management who can oversee vaccination programs, as well as a scarcity of accessible training opportunities for frontline workers.

While on-the-ground training initiatives have contributed to increased skill levels of immunization professionals, they remain inaccessible to the majority of health workers due to program costs, distance, and staffing challenges. And once the training sessions end, workers are often left without sources of feedback or managerial support.

These ongoing challenges present a ripe landscape for distance learning innovations in the immunization space — challenges that Immunization Academy is designed to tackle.



Immunization Academy:

An Innovative Approach That Prioritizes Accessibility

Immunization Academy launched in 2017 in response to these training challenges. Through a multi-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the YouTube of immunization training was born. The video lesson platform has evolved over the past three years, but remains committed to providing free training that's easily available to health workers in internet-limited environments.

Now, over 45,000 users a year benefit from the platform's 100+ educational videos in French, Swahili, Hausa, and English. Each platform feature was built to address specific needs faced by immunization workers in low and middle-income countries:



Short Lessons Designed for Impact

All Immunization Academy videos are less than 7 minutes in length and designed to address a targeted topic. This allows workers to pull up the video in their moment of need: as a quick refresher before an immunization session, or as a step-by-step guide to specific tasks, such as identifying and prioritizing coverage problems.



Offline Accessibility

With limited access to high-speed internet, Immunization Academy's video platform had to balance availability with accessibility. While all video lessons are available to stream on demand, users also have the option to download them to their mobile devices through the website or the Android application. Immunization Managers will frequently download videos from internet-equipped offices, then share via WhatsApp with rural staff. Users also report downloading videos in advance of in-person training sessions in regions that lack internet.



Community and Connection

Morale among health workers is notoriously low, in part due to the isolation and stress of the job, particularly in rural communities. The Immunization Academy platform provides a sense of community among users through social features, including a user directory and message boards. You can even filter users in the directory to find other workers in a specific country or with a specific role, allowing members the opportunity to network directly with peers.



Motivation and Opportunities for Career Advancement

Users earn credits for every video watched, allowing them to earn platinum, gold, silver, or bronze status within each training category. Public leaderboards display the achievements of the platform's most active members, incentivizing learners to continue to watch videos and earn credits. Since profiles are visible to other registered users and display the number of credits earned, learners can leverage their track record of training to demonstrate professional growth and advance their career.

An Approach that Works

Immunization Academy's radical approach to in-service training has many benefits: it provides a scalable, accessible solution to training in challenging environments, it fosters community, and it motivates learners to participate in training. But most importantly, it works.

Beginning in September 2019, Immunization Academy launched an efficacy study to evaluate the extent to which its video lessons caused knowledge gains in the target population of immunization workers. Study participants were first given a pre-test on topics related to cold chain, data monitoring, or vaccine delivery. Afterwards, they watched a selection of Immunization Academy videos and took a post-test. On average, post-test scores increased by 24.9% across a user population comprised of health workers and immunization managers.

These findings don't just support the use of video training platforms in immunization learning. They also indicate that Immunization Academy's approach to global health training can be expanded into other areas, including maternal health and nutrition. Increased access to effective training is a necessary step forward on the path of improved outcomes in global health.

References

[our efficacy study findings]

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