

# WOMEN AND HEALTH ACCESS IN CONTEMPORARY TANZANIA



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# Background and Goals



- Maternal and reproductive health is Millennium Development Goal #5 of the United Nations and “gender equality and empowerment of women in all health parameters” is listed as one of the Tanzanian government’s development policies. However, traditional medicine in Tanzania is becoming increasingly popular, due to reasons such as the high cost of commercial care and expensive treatments. Even the National Health Policy recognizes that about 60% of the population uses traditional and alternative care regularly, even in big cities where Western health care services are more readily available.
- The healthcare system implemented by the Tanzanian government follows the World Health Organization’s policy called the primary health care (PHC) approach. This aims to make basic care services available to all citizens, through clinics, both general health and maternal and child health, distributed among towns and villages. Why then, are so many women still going to traditional healers?
- My goal was to find out how much the state falls short of meeting the actual need for maternal care and how it is violating an individual’s health rights. I wanted to explore patterns of use of maternal care, focusing on antenatal care, to better understand what factors (including social, cultural, financial, etc) influence a pregnant woman’s decision to seek care from or attend a state facility versus a traditional healer.

# Results



- While over 90% of women in Tanzania make at least 1 of the 4 recommended antenatal clinic visits, indicating that knowledge of the need for maternal care is spreading, few are unable to make all of their visits.
- The distance from home to the clinic or hospital, cost of transportation, cost of services, and perceived inadequacy of the actual services offered are some of the reasons why women do not get the antenatal care that they need.
- Satisfaction with the care offered at clinics is often low, reflecting on a shortage of well-trained staff and supplies, leaving women to seek better care at hospitals, which are, however, more expensive and more difficult to reach.
- Unfortunately, there is no one solution to the problems facing women in the country. Each area or village has its own unique set of issues, stemming from any combination of the community, institutional, and/or referral levels. Independently the contributing factors could be addressed and solved, but together they will continue to make accessing the appropriate maternal care difficult for women.