

# THE USE OF STORIES TO UNDERSTAND MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH REALITIES: FEASIBILITY AND APPLICABILITY OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN LAKE ZONE, TANZANIA

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## BACKGROUND

Digital storytelling (DST) is a participant-led video creation process that explores a storyteller's lived experiences.<sup>1</sup>

Globally, DST has potential as a research and dissemination tool because it can capture deeply-personal experiences of marginalized community members,<sup>2-8</sup> may be culturally relevant as a research tool in contexts where oral storytelling is used to communicate knowledge,<sup>9-10</sup> and allows the participant to guide the messaging of a story, resulting in products with emotional impact that represent authentic experiences.<sup>8</sup>

Most reports on DST reflect experiences in high-income countries with specific logistical and technological capabilities.<sup>2</sup> There is a gap in understanding DST feasibility and applicability in low-income countries including Tanzania.

## OBJECTIVE

To report storyteller and facilitator reflections from a DST pilot conducted in Mwanza, Tanzania.

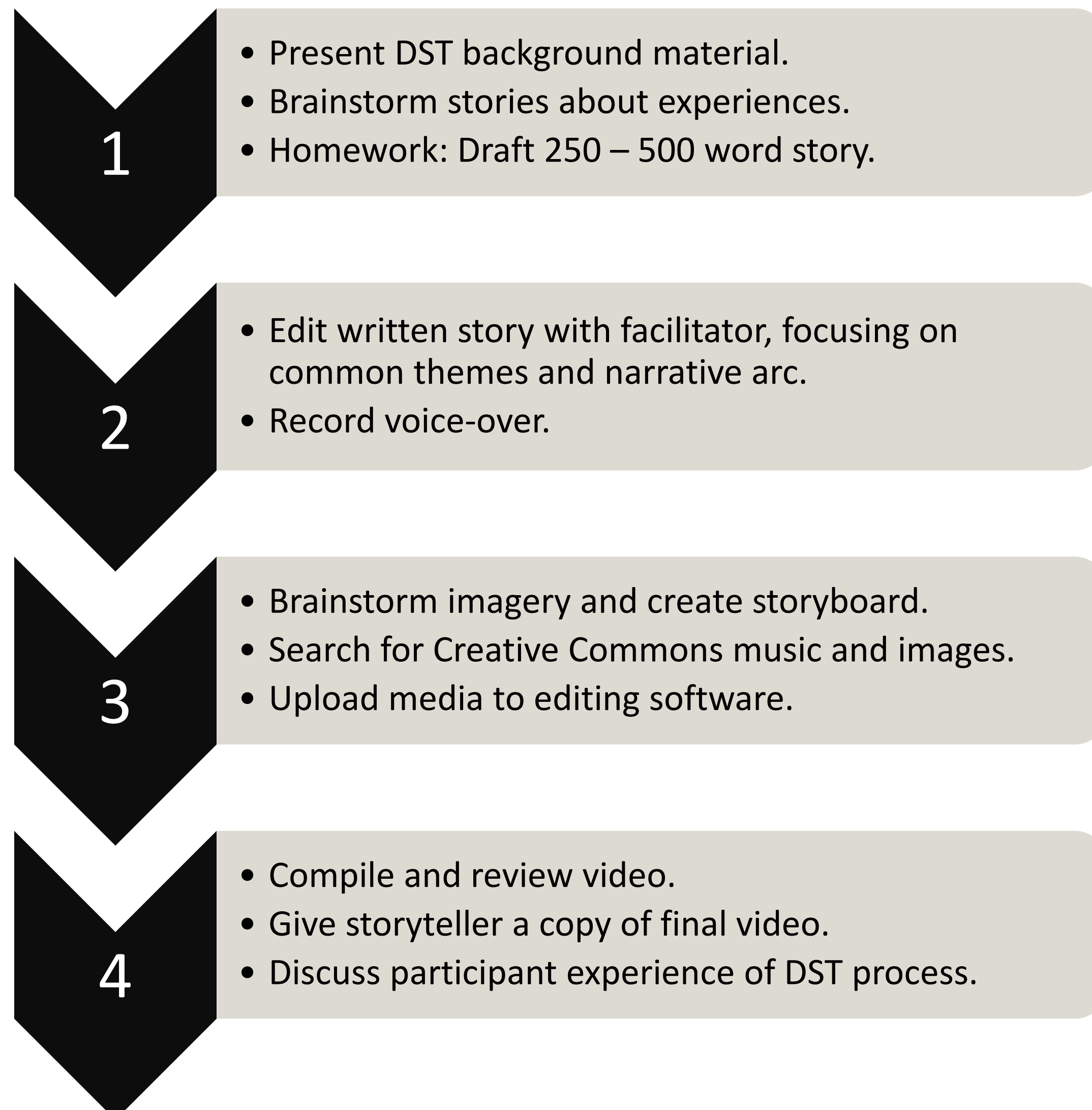
## METHODS

Using convenience sampling, three Tanzanian women were recruited for the pilot. All women were involved in a maternal and child health initiative in Mwanza Region. Each storyteller created one personal, digital story during four sessions technically supported by a Canadian DST facilitator.

Participants and the facilitator shared their experiences to identify themes related to feasibility and applicability.

## METHODS CONTINUED

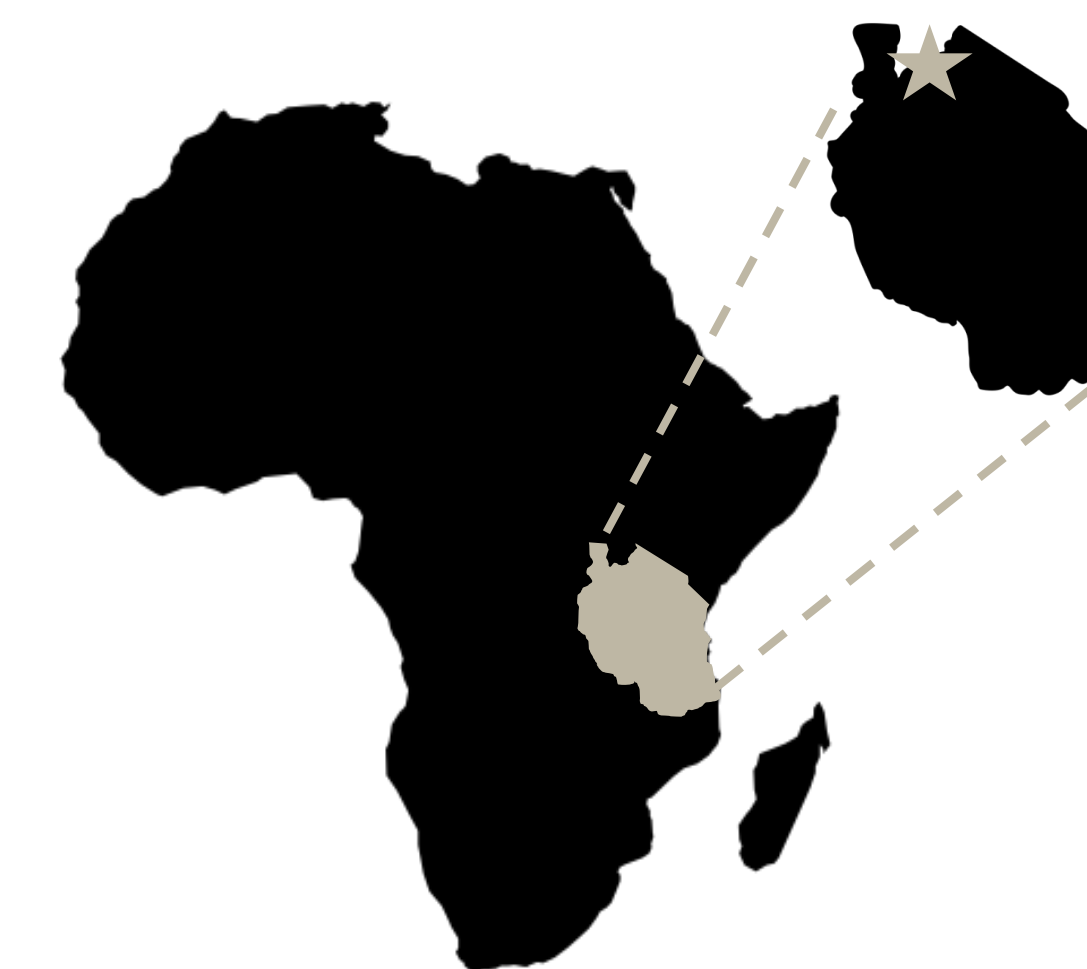
### DST SESSION STRUCTURE



### STORYTELLER REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING



### PILOT LOCATION: MWANZA, TANZANIA



## FINDINGS CONTINUED

Participants identified additional, anticipated challenges to DST if conducted in rural communities. Rural populations primarily speak Sukuma language and have limited literacy, and there may be potential to stigmatize less-empowered women who share controversial stories



## CONCLUSION

In urban Lake Zone, Tanzania, DST was a feasible and applicable tool for capturing a participant's experience and communicating the emotional content. A pilot to engage rural participants should be considered, assuming the process can be adapted to manage language and literacy barriers, and to reduce risk of stigma.

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## FINDINGS

Storytellers described the DST process as useful, meaningful, and transformative. Compared to traditional qualitative research and dissemination methods, like interviews or documentary video, DST allowed storytellers to characterize their experiences in their own words and voices. Continuous storyteller involvement facilitated a sense of ownership and empowerment when viewing the final product. DST allowed participants to assign meaning to past life events and reflect deeply on how their experiences have shaped their paths. However, there were moderate challenges involved in DST in this context.

### DST CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN THE PILOT



**Time Commitment**  
Each story required four sessions and a total of 10-14 hours to complete.



**Context-Appropriate Media**  
Creative Commons images and music tend to be western-centric.



**Unreliable Internet Access.**  
Limited internet access made searching for available media time-consuming.



**Communication.**  
Certain DST phrases, including 'story moments' and 'metaphorical imagery' were difficult to communicate.



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