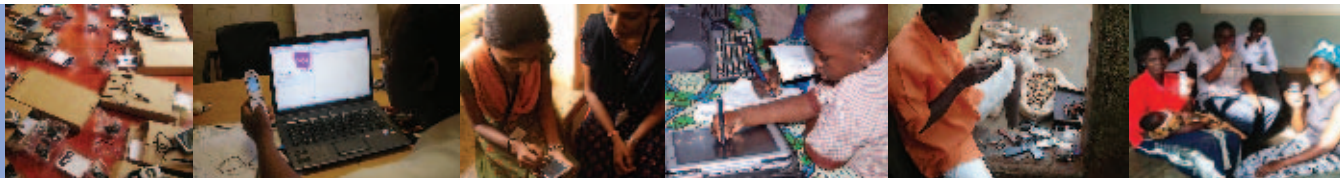


The Knowledge for Health Project: Focus on mHealth



mHealth, the use of mobile technology to support health-related services, provides new opportunities for improving health care services, even in remote and hard-to-reach areas.

Recognizing the potential of mHealth to transform health service delivery in developing countries, the Knowledge for Health (K4Health) Project is applying its leadership in knowledge management and information and communication technology to synthesize and share knowledge on mHealth and employ mHealth applications in the field.

Our mHealth activities center around three main areas: implementing a pilot mobile phone program among community health workers (CHWs) in Malawi; spearheading an interdisciplinary mHealth Working Group; and developing and continually updating an eToolkit on mHealth that provides access to key mHealth resources.

mHealth in Malawi

Community health workers in Malawi provide a critical link in the health delivery system, as the majority of the population lives in rural areas. However, CHWs rarely receive updates after their initial training. Results from a K4Health health information needs assessment in Malawi revealed a knowledge gap among CHWs.

The K4Health Malawi Pilot Project, launched in May 2010 by K4Health partner Management Sciences for Health (MSH), created an SMS-based mobile phone network between CHWs and district health centers to increase access to and promote use of essential health information among CHWs. Working in collaboration with FrontlineSMS and the Ministry of Health, K4Health distributed



663 mobile phones and solar chargers to all CHWs in two pilot districts of Salima and Nkhosakota, serving a catchment area of 652,326 Malawians.

The mobile phone network enables direct communication in real time between the CHWs and the district health centers, as well as among CHWs themselves.

- District health centers have sent over 2,000 outgoing SMS messages to alert CHWs about new resources, training opportunities, changes in protocols, and special events such as community vaccination dates.
- CHWs receive on-demand treatment support for their clients from the district health centers, such as information about medication dosages, contraceptive side effects, and prompt responses to emergencies such as high-risk pregnancies and outbreaks such as measles. They have sent over 1,000 SMS messages to the district health centers since the project launch in May 2010.
- The teams also use the mobile phone network for data collection, for example, to report drug stock-outs so that clients never miss their monthly supply of contraceptives.

Visit the K4Health Malawi page for more information: www.k4health.org/malawi.

mHealth Working Group

Founded in August 2009, the mHealth Working Group is a collaborative forum for sharing and synthesizing knowledge on mHealth, supported by the K4Health Project.

Composed of more than 350 individuals representing over 100 organizations worldwide, the mHealth Working Group seeks to frame mobile technology within a larger global health strategy. By applying public health standards and practices to mHealth, we promote approaches that are appropriate, evidence-based, interoperable, and scalable in resource-poor settings. The Working Group holds regular meetings in Washington, DC, to discuss promising approaches, challenges, and lessons learned.

To join the mHealth Working Group listserv, go to www.k4health.org/toolkits/mhealth/mhealth-listserv.

mHealth Toolkit

Supported by the mHealth Working Group, the mHealth Toolkit provides an objective source on the opportunities and challenges introduced by mHealth. It provides quick and easy access to an electronic library of important mHealth resources, including the current evidence base for mHealth and instructive program examples. Resources cover a wide range of health sectors including HIV/AIDS, malaria, and RH/FP. Careful attention is paid to mHealth applications for data collection, behavior change communication, and provider training.

Please visit the toolkit at www.k4health.org/toolkits/mHealth.



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