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K4Health
Knowledge for Health

SUCCESS STORY

Adapting Global Content to Improve Knowledge of Community Health Workers in Ghana

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for half of maternal deaths worldwide. In Ghana, the government has shown a strong commitment to reducing these preventable deaths, yet maternal and infant mortality rates remain alarmingly high and concentrated in rural areas.

Community health nurses (CHNs) are often the primary providers of maternal, newborn, and child health care (MNCH) in rural Ghanaian communities. Yet CHNs face significant challenges to address the health care needs of their communities, which are geographically diffuse and often under-resourced. While CHNs serve a crucial role, they are the least credentialed nurses within the Ghana Health Service, and have limited opportunities for career advancement. Their experience maps with global trends, which indicated that although there are more in-service training programs developed for health workers than ever before, a continuum of learning from pre-service to in-service training is needed.



Mobile technology provides an unprecedented opportunity to deliver continuing professional development opportunities and training to health workers where and when they need it. The success of these technologies relies equally on their content as well as their design; this is particularly true of workforce development applications, which largely rely on the transfer of information and knowledge.

From February 2014 to December 2015, K4Health collaborated with Ghana Health Service (GHS) and Grameen Foundation to provide CHNs in five rural districts of Ghana access to professional development courses via an Android app. Our goal was two-fold: to provide accessible, high-quality, relevant educational opportunities to an indispensable group of primary care providers and to understand how the provision of learning materials could improve workplace satisfaction and equip CHNs with new technical knowledge, advancing their careers and ultimately improving the quality of MNCH care in rural areas.

The Android app, developed by Grameen, was designed in response to the five drivers and roadblocks that CHNs report impact their motivation and job satisfaction. K4Health provided educational content for the app through the USAID Global Health eLearning Center (GHeL) website (www.globalhealthlearning.org), which K4Health manages. GHeL has over 80 free, expertly vetted global health and development courses and is known as a premier provider of public health continuing professional development.

K4Health reviewed GHeL family planning and maternal, newborn, and child health course content for suitability to CHNs and the local needs in Ghana. Content was then reviewed in detail for language and understandability, content relevance, and to ensure that it complied with local health protocols. During this stage of the adaptation process, Ghana Health Service created additional content for key topics not included in the original courses. The review process truly highlighted the collaborative nature of the effort, with multiple departments of the reproductive and child health division of GHS working together to revise the content for local context.

K4Health also worked with Grameen in engaging Ghana's Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) to accredit the adapted courses so that they would count as continuing professional development credit towards the CHNs' annual renewal of their professional license. In June 2015, Grameen received an accreditation letter from NMC, signifying national level approval of the courses as high quality and important learning resources for CHNs in updating and improving their knowledge. These were the first mLearning courses that NMC had ever approved.

The final product – the CHN on the Go app – contained six modules focused on planning, point of care, learning, staying well, achievement, and a supervisor’s dashboard to track activities and achievements.

K4Health’s course contributions to the CHN on the Go app have been among its most popular and successful. To date, 14 adapted GHeL family and MNCH courses have been deployed on mobile devices to 220 CHNs and 55 district supervisors in five districts of Ghana: Ada East, Ada West and Ningo Prampram in the Greater Accra Region and South Tongu, and South Dayi in the Volta Region. The Learning Center continues to be the most accessed. In fact, 95% of CHNs installed all 5 family planning courses and 78% installed all 9 MNCH courses. Evaluation indicates that CHNs are not only accessing the courses, but also retaining the information. From June 2014 to September 2015, 234 successful course completions, passing with a final exam score of 85% or higher, had been recorded.

Research indicates that the CHN on the Go app has helped CHNs broaden their knowledge and has been used as an alternate source of information when their supervisors are not around. A CHN from Ada East district reported, “For me, it has improved my knowledge on the courses. How to take care of the client, how to counsel the client, that is for my personal use too.” Another CHN reported “it improves on our confidence level and also increase our knowledge.” During consultations, some CHNs have given the phone to literate clients to read for themselves the information on contraceptive options. CHNs report that such clients have found this very useful in making an informed decision on contraceptive choice.

“I now feel very confident as a CHN in the community because I am able to answer clients questions on family planning issues well. I have been able to convince some difficult clients to choose a family planning method or service.”

– CHN on the Go user

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