

Home Based Care Workers Test Mobile Patient Service in Malawi



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Home based care workers in the Southern Region of Malawi recently conducted a test with smartphones that will make it easier for them to collect patient data and allows them to more easily refer patients to hospitals and receive feedback from hospitals.

Health workers in Mangochi, Malawi tested several systems to improve home based care. Mangochi (and Malawi in general) faces many health problems such as [HIV/Aids](#) and there are many chronically ill people. These people often rely on home based care workers who can direct them to hospitals and monitor the status of health in remote areas.

Eventually out of three mobile systems, Commcare was selected as the system to conduct field tests with. On smartphones, this application runs a form that can be used by health workers when making field visits to patients. The information that these visits generate (age of patients, what the patient has etc.) is then sent to the district health commission's office via mobile internet. There, it is placed in a health database, that can provide insight for policy makers into the health situation of the area.

A digital system can offer significant improvement over the more common way of collecting patient records through pen and paper as this was often not done correctly and papers often got lost. It also saves time because beforehand, the care workers had to wait until they had enough reports and then physically hand in the forms at an office hours away.

Digitally referring patients to hospitals

At a later stage, test will also be conducted to see how the system works with referring patients to hospitals. It proves to be very hard for home based care workers to make appointments with hospitals for the sick people that they visit. Doing this digitally could save time for patients.

This is the initial phase of nationwide homebase care approach in which Dutch NGOs IICD and Cordaid support four projects that work with home based care throughout Malawi. All four projects were involved in the Mangochi test in Mangochi from the start. IICD and Cordaid support this programme through the Connect4Change (C4C) Consortium. In the project in Malawi, Dutch NGO Text to Change is also involved.

Initial results

Five home based care workers successfully finished initial field tests with smartphones and the Commcare system. They were trained how to use smartphones and then filled out forms digitally. The three other project partners throughout Malawi are now also procuring equipment as they were satisfied with the test. The platform works and data now arrives on a server, but there are still some problems with how to put the present the data in an easy to read way. This will be the main focus in the coming weeks.



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