Creating Global Resources for Developing Mobile Family Planning Applications for Community Health Workers

In 2018, the USAID-funded Advancing Partners & Communities (APC) project launched an initiative to develop global resources for designing FP mobile applications for community health workers (CHWs).

BACKGROUND

For years, ministries of health, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and technology vendors have built mobile applications to support CHWs deliver quality family planning (FP) counseling and services. At the same time, they have created various pockets of expertise in content and design. Although developed for various contexts and users, the applications often have significant overlap in content, workflows, and design. Many have highlighted the challenges of this fragmented approach, inspiring a nascent movement toward developing standardized products.

PURPOSE & APPROACH

To align digital solutions that improve FP service delivery among CHWs, APC is producing a generic set of resources that FP stakeholders can use as a starting point for developing FP mobile applications. APC is spearheading this effort in collaboration with international and local NGOs, technology firms, donors, and ministries of health. The initiative will take place through four phases:

I. Review best-practice digital FP applications for CHWs and distill key features from best practice applications with FP and digital health stakeholders.

II. Standardize digital FP app design resources, such as workflow diagrams, specifications, and mock-ups.

III. Field-test and revise resources.

IV. Disseminate resources and lessons to the global health community.
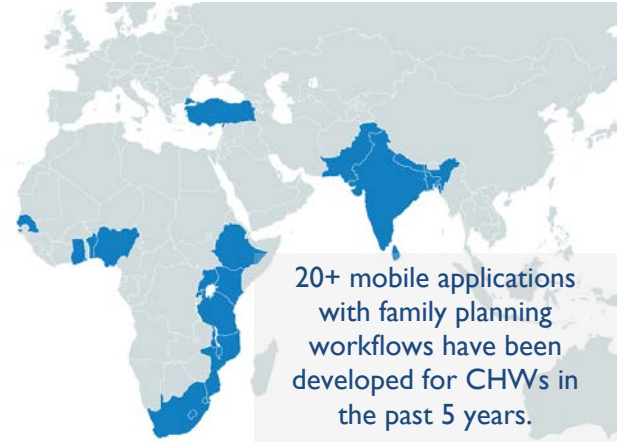
PURPOSE & APPROACH

APC expects this activity to:

• Reduce overlap and duplication of FP application content and design elements.

• Reduce time and resources devoted to developing FP applications.

• Ensure FP applications are aligned with global FP standards and guidance.

• Contribute to the body of knowledge on using digital health tools to advance FP.

• Enhance partner collaboration and cooperation in FP and digital health.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Conducted a landscape analysis of best-in-class FP applications

APC reached out to three donor organizations, at least five convening groups, 16 technology and design firms, and more than 25 program implementers working in global digital health and/or FP to learn more about recent FP applications they had developed and implemented. The landscape analysis included the following parameters:

20+ mobile applications with family planning workflows have been developed for CHWs in the past 5 years.

- Provider-centered digital applications that improve quality and/or coverage of FP services at the community level.

- Applications that focus on improving client-provider interactions (e.g., client management and tracking, real-time service provision, adherence to treatment protocols).

- Designed and/or implemented within the last five years.

- Achieved scale of at least 100 users.

The project identified more than 20 applications with FP workflows and produced an overview of the key components of these applications to inform development of preliminary versions of the global resources.

Convened stakeholders to generate feedback and input

The APC team then held a stakeholder workshop to present the landscape analysis; facilitate discussion of experiences implementing, scaling, and integrating FP applications and tools; and lead brainstorming activities to understand how mobile applications might better advance and support FP service delivery among CHWs.

APC used the workshop feedback to fine-tune the activity and develop a list of priority features for a mobile FP application. The list is currently informing workflow diagrams illustrating how the proposed system would work, key data elements, and mock-ups of a generic app design.

In August 2018, APC held a workshop to launch the activity and solicit feedback from FP and digital health experts.

NEXT STEPS

With the continued collaboration of partners, APC is developing prototypes of the design resources to field-test with CHWs in several countries. The project will solicit additional input and feedback from an array of country-level stakeholders. APC expects to disseminate the final design resources, and related lessons, in mid-2019.

APC welcomes collaboration! Please email mapc_digital_health@jsi.com to take part in this effort. For more information on APC, please visit the website: https://www.advancingpartners.org/.