

Innovations Technology Initiative Approaches

By Taddeo Bwambale

Community health workers in 70 districts countrywide are to start monitoring health projects aimed at reducing the death of mothers and children using smartphones.

Each of the 4,075 health workers has been equipped with a smartphone and Internet data for use in conducting field operations that include delivering life-saving commodities to women and children.

The health workers, known as 'Community Health Promoters' were recruited by BRAC Uganda, a development organisation with roots in Bangladesh, which is also piloting the smartphone application.

The mobile app was developed by Medic Mobile, a non-profit technology company and promoted by Living Goods, an initiative dedicated to ending child mortality.

Health workers will use the app to register every pregnancy, track disease outbreaks faster, keep stock of essential medicines and communicate about emergencies.

Speaking during a stakeholders' meeting on community health at Hotel Africana in Kampala yesterday, the health programme manager BRAC Uganda, Sharit Sharit, said the mobile app was one of the innovations to improve access to healthcare and reduces the death of mothers and children.

"The mobile app will capture reports of community health promoters in real-time and this information will be available in our database," she said.

The state minister for health, Sarah Opendi, praised BRAC Uganda for initiating health projects, which she said would supplement existing efforts

Maternal, child health to be monitored via mobile app



Hasina Akhter, Henry Mwebesa and senior BRAC public relations officer John Pamba during the stakeholders meeting yesterday. Photo by Godivier Asege

to tame high, but declining maternal and child health.

"Your health model has been complementing the Government's Village Health Teams (VHT) model focusing on provision of reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health at community level," she said.

The minister, represented by

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the acting Director General for health services, Dr Henry Mwebesa, hailed the

organisation for its work in disease control and provision of essential medicines at

household level.

She cited interventions in malaria, diarrhoea and pneumonia using an integrated community case management system that heavily relies on volunteers.

BRAC launched operations in Uganda in 2007 and has since grown into one of the largest development organisations,

reaching over 3.4 million in 85 districts. Globally, it operates in 11 countries.

Hasina Akhter, BRAC Uganda's country representative, said its humanitarian work was guided by an integrated development model combining poverty alleviation, agriculture, microfinance and education.

"We want to contribute to the health system in Uganda through quality and sustainable approaches, drawing from the successful experience of our programmes in Bangladesh," she said.

The organisation is pushing for a door-to-door health service delivery model to reach underprivileged communities and extend basic health products to under served communities.

The infant mortality rate stands at 43 deaths per 1,000 live births, under-five mortality at 54 per 1,000 live births and maternal mortality of 336 per 100,000 death births according to statistics from the health ministry.

According to a 2014/15 Annual Government Performance Report, facility-based maternal deaths fell from 168 per 100,000 live births in 2013 to 146 in 2014.

District leaders yesterday acknowledged that maternal and child