

Abstract

Title of abstract: Designing and piloting tailored m-Health interventions to accelerate national HIV response targeting adolescents and youths in Zambia: “Zambia Ureport”.

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Background

Despite the increasing adoption of mobile phones by young people in sub-Saharan Africa, there is paucity of large scale mobile health (m-Health) programme aiming at increasing HIV comprehensive knowledge and generate tailored demand for high impact HIV interventions.

During a design workshop with stakeholders including young people, mobile phone companies and software developers, we identified three programme outputs: Effective SMS-based mechanism to increase young people participation in the national HIV prevention response available; Young people have increased comprehensive knowledge of high impact HIV prevention measures and services; and Young people demand for and are referred to HIV high impact prevention services (HTC, Condoms, MC, ART).

Methods

We built the software environment using open-source software (RapidSMS); negotiated reduced SMS costs with all 3 mobile companies in Zambia; established a reverse billing system to ensure free SMS to users and established a hub for SMS counselors through partnership with one local partner. The platform provides confidential, free of charge, individualized and interactive counseling services on HIV, STI to adolescents and youths. The counselor web-interface allows for quality control of the SMS counseling. In addition, the platform enables tailored SMS demand creation for available services, and referral to closer location. The programme tracks and reports periodically on key knowledge gaps and emerging issues related to HIV and STI among young people. We used various promotional activities to market the initiative in two pilot provinces (Lusaka and Copperbelt).

Results

From December 2012 to October 2013, 17,611 Ureporters joined the programme, 36% aged 15-19 years and 40% aged 20-24 years. Over 12,000 (70%) Ureporters engaged counselors through SMS, generating 63,695 SMS. Most Ureporters reside in Lusaka (49%) and Copperbelt (30%) provinces. On average, each of the three SMS counselors attends to 80 SMS requests per day. The programme completed 2 opinion polls, one SMS-campaign on HTC, and generated a knowledge bank on critical HIV and STI related issues of concern for young people.

Conclusion

We plan to integrate big data analytics to generate real-time insights for tailored demand creation and needs for services among young people; and conduct an evaluation after one year to inform national roll-out and sustainability.