



Wilton Park

Concept

(Re)Building health systems in West Africa: what role for mobile technology?

Monday 15 – Wednesday 17 June 2015 | WP1409

In partnership with mPowering Frontline Health Workers

Context and objectives

The Ebola pandemic has exposed the weak state of health services and systems in West Africa and the devastating impact these have for the health of populations. Similar problems with health systems also exist in many other parts of Africa. *‘Investing in Global Health, Sustaining Gains, Transforming Lives’* describes investment in health systems as the best action developing countries can take to ensure resilience against a disease burden that is shifting rapidly and in unpredictable ways. As the post-2015 agenda takes shape developing countries are acknowledging the importance of strong health systems to achieve health impact² and the critical importance of skilled and connected frontline health workers who are usually the first point of contact for health care for citizens, particularly in rural areas.

This forward-looking dialogue will consider the healthcare systems in West Africa, in particular those in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone following the Ebola crisis: and explore how ICT solutions created in response to the crisis can now be effectively integrated into systems that meet future health needs of populations over the coming decade and beyond.

This event will build on the post-Ebola data harmonization discussions (due to be held in Accra date to be confirmed) sponsored by the USAID Global Development Lab where participants are ensuring effective donor and partner coordination in the use of ICT to restore and strengthen health services.

Continuing this dialogue the meeting will examine the role that mobile technology can play to help strengthen these systems and support frontline health workers as part of ongoing national and regional planning for the post-ebola health systems recovery phase.

As a capacity-building mechanism mobile technology can help governments address the geographic and economic constraints limiting health service delivery in resource-poor settings. Mobile devices represent a key opportunity for developing countries to reach isolated health workers, and manage procurement more effectively. Furthermore, mobile technologies offer exponential opportunities for intelligent devices to automate data collection, disease surveillance, rapid testing, improve accountability, and strengthen the interconnections between health workers, health facilities and Health Ministries.

This event will provide a space for open debate, sharing ideas, and developing solutions collaboratively to support national and international efforts. The foundations of health system rebuilding in West Africa are already taking place. The format for dialogue provides the intellectual and creative space to develop the collaborations needed to turn ideas into proposals, and proposals into substantive

¹ (Institute of Medicine, October 2014)

² Strengthening Health Systems for Lasting Impact: [Draft](#) USAID Vision For Action For Health Systems Strengthening: 2015-2019

action between partners in the months and years following the meeting.

It will uniquely bring together the health policy-making, medical, telecom, biotech, implementation research, and donor communities for a dynamic perspective on health systems and mHealth initiatives in the discreet Wilton Park setting, conducive to in-depth, collaborative conversation.

The aim of the discussions is to facilitate commitments and ongoing collaboration between organisations and individuals at the meeting which contribute to enhancing health systems during this critical period.

In particular the meeting seeks to:

- Create and engage a network of policymakers, practitioners and private sector representatives from developing and more advanced economies;
- Share knowledge and experiences on innovative and relevant technologies for health systems strengthening already in place in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and elsewhere in Africa;
- Draw on case studies to share lessons and best practices in the effective use of these mobile technologies and the potential to create an integrated and holistic approach to improve weak health systems;
- Formulate a process to identify a core set of technology strategies appropriate to strengthen packages of essential health interventions, and the means to finance and support technology solutions at scale;
- Identify next steps, action points for and commitments to scaling up and institutionalising a core set of appropriate technology solutions.

Potential themes for discussion

- **Weak health systems:** What technology strategies can be leveraged to improve local health systems in an integrated manner?
- **Training and supporting frontline health workers:** How can mobile technology respond to challenges (eg training, supervision, mentorship, language barriers)? How to ensure mobile training complements national protocols and curricula?
- **Making use of data:** How to best make use of data (e.g. earlier identification of future pandemics, health facility staffing, health services data)? What digital infrastructure is needed to make data compatible across countries and regions?
- **Case studies: vulnerability to global health crises:** How to make health systems in West Africa more resilient? What lessons can be learnt from effective use of mobile technology and media?
- **Essential Core Technology Strategies:** What are the essential technology strategies that should complement packages of essential health interventions? What are the appropriate mechanisms to identify, recommend, and finance these at national scale?
- **Convergence:** how to ensure whole-system solutions that are greater than the sum of the individual technologies? Use of Interoperability frameworks such as OpenHIE to identify shared information resources (for example facility and health worker registries) and common standards for exchange of health information. Using existing country investments in DHIS2, iHRIS and other national health systems as a foundation and backbone for other technologies to build on and strengthen.
- **Standards: Ensuring security and quality:** How to regulate access to and use of data, harmonise standards and promote interoperability? How to make innovative mobile technologies affordable and sustainable?
- **Collaboration: who needs to talk with whom?** How to link up local governments and health workers with national government, technology and donor communities? How can private sector engagement help to boost support for technology in health? How to ensure community engagement?
- **Effective Implementation:** How to ensure appropriate technology solutions are

- implemented effectively, and systems can be easily replicated?
- **Next steps:** How to scale up and sustain long-term capacity?

Outputs and outcomes

- Identified innovative examples and cases of information technology contributing to health system provision with the potential to be scaled up nationally in the three Ebola affected countries as a complement to standard packages of health interventions
- Analysed existing mobile technology and national health information system solutions as part of health systems strengthening and proposed potential areas to build on
- Created collaborations and collective action through working groups
- Built a strong network among participants, with the opportunity to network informally in the house and grounds and contact details shared after the event to enhance future collaboration
- Secured commitments to action points from all participants
- Generated a report summarising key takeaways and conclusions to be widely shared beyond the participants.

Format and participation

A 48 hour residential meeting at Wiston House, Wilton Park's base in West Sussex.

A suggested 45-50 participants, at least half from Africa, will include government officials from health and other ministries, in addition to representatives from international forums (eg WHO, ITU, WB, WEF, UN, EC), technology companies (e.g. Qualcomm, Intel, Samsung, Nuviun, GSMA, Alcatel-Lucent, Airtel, Vodafone), pharmaceutical and companies (e.g. GSK, Bayer, Gilead, J&J), major NGOs and foundations (eg Oxfam, World Vision, Clinton Foundation, DHI), academia and civil society.

Discussion will be off the record. Small working groups and plenary sessions will encourage more in-depth debate, teasing out necessary steps. Final commitments from participants, with the aim of substantive action taking place between participants in the months and years following the event. Our rigorous monitoring and evaluation process ensures continued impact beyond the event itself, maintaining contact with partners and participants to track the progress of commitments made.

Wilton Park

[Wilton Park](#) is an executive agency of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office providing a global forum for strategic discussion. Organising over 60 events a year in the UK and overseas, it brings together leading representatives from the worlds of politics, business, academia, diplomacy, civil society and media to focus on issues of international security, prosperity and justice. Over the past 15 years, we have hosted a series of discussions on global health issues including tackling Malaria, HIV/AIDS, AMR, counterfeit medicines and the role of public-private partnerships in health systems.

Enquiries about the programme and participation:

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