



Program Brief

Mobile for Reproductive Health Project: Tanzania

An innovative system using text messages to share information on family planning methods, called mobile for reproductive health (m4RH), is scaling up in Tanzania. The project began in 2010, when FHI 360's Program for Strengthening Services (PROGRESS) project launched m4RH as a pilot project, working with the Department of Reproductive and Child Health Services of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW). Multiple service delivery partners participated by promoting the service in clinics and communities.

PROGRESS worked closely through the Family Planning Technical Working Group (FPTWG) to develop and launch m4RH. The project sought to evaluate the acceptability, feasibility, and potential behavioral impact of providing contraceptive information via text message on mobile phones. A person in Tanzania could access the m4RH system in Swahili from any phone in the country by texting m4RH to the short code 15014. A similar pilot project began about the same time in Kenya. See "What Is m4RH?" (left) for a description of the text message system. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funded this work. The technological partner was Text to Change.

Pilot Project Succeeds

Several service delivery projects took an interest in the project and advertised m4RH via posters and flyers in their health facilities and listed those facilities in the m4RH clinic database. They included Marie Stopes International, Pathfinder International, Comprehensive

Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT) Hospital, PSI, and another FHI 360 project called ROADS. The Pathfinder and ROADS projects, which were focusing on HIV/AIDS prevention and services at the community level, saw m4RH as a way to begin addressing the family planning needs of their clients. Their community health workers and peer educators distributed small palm-sized cards on m4RH during individual counseling and at larger outreach events.

During the Tanzania pilot from September 2010 to June 2011, users made a total of 4,813 contraceptive queries (2,870 unique users) to the m4RH system. Among all Tanzanian users, the most popular contraceptive method queried was natural family planning (21%), followed by condoms (12%). Users in Tanzania reported via SMS that they learned about m4RH through posters placed in health facilities or clinics (59%); partners, relatives, and friends (18%); or community health workers (18%). During in-depth telephone interviews with 26 Tanzanians, the m4RH users reported they were very satisfied with the program, saying the messages were easy to understand and informative.

Adolescents and young adults up to 29 years old were the most frequent users of m4RH, among those reporting their age. About 44% of users who reported their gender were men. Combined analysis of the Kenya and Tanzania data found that providing contraceptive information via this text message-based mobile phone system is an effective strategy for reaching the general public, including young people and men, and for influencing their contraceptive behavior.

What Is m4RH?

The Mobile for Reproductive Health (m4RH) program is an automated, interactive, and on-demand system using short message service (SMS) or "text messaging", which is accessible from every mobile phone across all cell phone providers. The m4RH system provides basic information about the full range of short-acting and long-acting contraceptive methods and addresses common misconceptions. The text messages present information in a concise format consisting of two to three screens per method. Messages were developed using best practices for health communication programs, global guidance from the World Health Organization, country-specific national family planning guidelines, and assistance from local agencies.



ROADS' community health workers promoted m4RH.

However, more research is needed to learn how to effectively link m4RH users to family planning services.

Pilot Attracts Attention, Expands Reach

Close working relationships established with key partners helped ensure m4RH's success and are supporting its current growth and expansion. In addition, m4RH benefited from a vibrant mHealth Community of Practice in the country that promotes regular communication among implementing partners. These stakeholders influenced and guided the development process by articulating local family planning and reproductive health priorities and needs, by providing technical expertise and contextual experience in family planning and reproductive health, by offering locally relevant suggestions for effective promotion, and by linking m4RH to service delivery organizations.

As the pilot unfolded, PROGRESS provided regular updates to stakeholders indicating the growing use of the service and reached out to additional partners who agreed to promote m4RH, including the German donor GIZ and the national youth project called ISHI. As a result, monthly hits on m4RH averaged around 5,000 during most of the pilot.

During one three-month mass media campaign that included m4RH, the number of hits jumped much higher, with a sixteen-fold increase. The Tanzania Capacity and Communication Project (TCCP) integrated m4RH into its national family planning campaign called "Jiamini!" ("be confident"). TCCP had originally planned to include mobile phones in their programming, but after learning about m4RH, they worked with PROGRESS to integrate it into the campaign rather than develop a new service. TCCP is a five-year USAID health communications bi-lateral project led by Johns Hopkins University.

Stakeholder meetings and continuous outreach during the pilot provided opportunities to link m4RH to other mHealth activities. For example, PROGRESS was able to develop SMS

**Welcome to M4RH
free info service. For
implants reply 11,
IUD 21, permanent
31, injectable 41,
pills 51, EC 61,
condoms 71, Natural
Family Planning 81,
LAM 91.**

m4RH
Mobile 4 Reproductive Health

Pata taarifa zote unazohitaji kuhusu njia za

uzazi wa mpango

NI YA BURE!
yenye usiri na kufaa

Tuma ujumbe mfupi unaoesema
m4RH
kupitia laini yako ya simu kwenda
15014

- Zifahamu njia za uzazi wa mpango
- Chagua njia iliyo bora kwako
- Pata maelezo kuhusu afya ya uzazi
- Pata maelezo ya kliniki

YENYE USIRI NA KUFAA

Inatumika masaa 24 kwa siku, siku 7 kwa wiki!

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE | PROGRESS IN FAMILY PLANNING | MARIE STOPES Tanzania | text to change | fhi THE SCIENCE OF IMPROVING LIVES

m4RH promotional poster describes the features of the service.

messages about family planning for expecting and new mothers for a national maternal and child health project called Wazazi Nipendi, which was also using SMS to communicate with individuals. Through these ongoing discussions, partners suggested that m4RH should expand to include messages addressing side

effects of family planning methods and other issues related to uptake and continuation of methods. After the pilot was completed, FHI 360/PROGRESS developed new content addressing these needs. This expanded m4RH service is preparing to launch in mid-2013. A subcommittee of the FPTWG, including the MOHSW, FHI 360/PROGRESS, PSI,

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m4RH is a convenient and private information source.

Marie Stopes International, TCCP, and EngenderHealth, is coordinating this effort.

Next Steps

Discussions with stakeholders also have focused on how to ensure the long-term viability of m4RH in Tanzania. The MOHSW has expressed support for m4RH as an important platform for strengthening informed choice and for reaching priority target audiences, including men and young people. They also have encouraged FHI 360 to explore public-private partnerships, user fees, and other means to sustain m4RH. In the short-term, TCCP is now funding and managing m4RH, including costs of the technological partner, which

ensures that m4RH will remain accessible at least until that project ends in 2015. FHI 360 will continue to organize and coordinate m4RH partners.

In addition, FHI 360 will continue to be involved in developing, testing, and refining the expanded m4RH content. Data indicating a positive impact on method uptake or continuation would lead to the expanded version of m4RH replacing the basic m4RH service within Tanzania. The experience and data gleaned in Tanzania will also provide a solid foundation and best practices for countries and programs around the world interested in implementing m4RH.

FHI 360/PROGRESS has been fortunate to work in the collaborative mHealth environment that exists in Tanzania, which is conducive to finding efficiencies and leveraging in-country resources and opportunities. These relationships are helping to ensure that m4RH will continue to be a private and convenient source of quality reproductive health information for men and women throughout Tanzania.

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