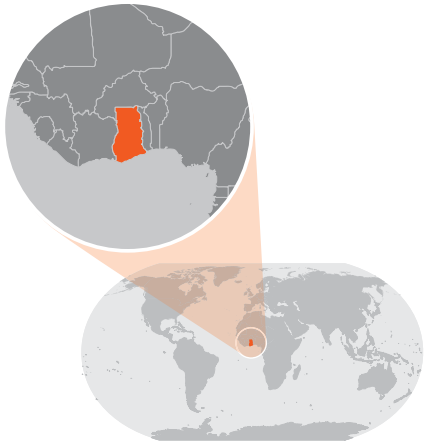
SAVANA SIGNATURES
TAMALE, GHANA



WWW.SAVSIGN.ORG

BACKGROUND

Savana Signatures is currently implementing a Technology for Maternal Health project in four districts (Tamale, Yendi, Savelugu and Kumbungu) and six health facilities (Kings Medical Center, Yendi, Savelugu, Tamale Central, Tamale West and Tamale Teaching hospitals) in Ghana. Prior to the project, these facilities have been limited to communicating maternal health information to expectant mothers at their monthly visits. Additionally, the effectiveness of using ICT to share information about maternal health in these facilities is not widely known and needs to be demonstrated.

USING THE MAMA MESSAGES

In adapting the MAMA messages, a three-member review committee of health personnel studied and approved the messages for use. These were later adapted and translated into the local dialect for recording as audio messages for the sake of non-literate expectant mothers. During this process, the program team gathered information from recipients to suggest that they trust information from health experts more than from academia. Additionally, the program team applied the findings of a report published by the Grameen Foundation on the MOTECH project in Ghana. It suggested that women were quite open to receiving information from a male voice for certain topics if it meant their husbands might be encouraged to become equally knowledgeable and supportive by also listening to the message. It was also found that people wanted to hear an older, softer voice, akin to a trusted, experienced and sympathetic "auntie". Voices that sounded too educated were not widely accepted as they were perceived as being out of touch with the daily struggles of life experienced by the end user.[1]

1. Grameen Foundation – MOTECH in Ghana: Early Lessons Learned, pg 25



Given that user comfort was found to differ between message delivery by a male or female voice according to the particular message, both a midwife and a male health promoter were selected to translate and record the messages in Dagbanli.

PROGRAM SPECIFICS

The project design included setting up maternal health corners, organizing knowledge sharing sessions, and delivery of SMS/ audio messages. The project intends to make easily understandable maternal health information readily accessible to expectant mothers, and also to use the efficacy of ICT to provide maternal health care communication to expectant mothers in the remotest locations.

Special features of this program include a flashing system, whereby expectant mothers can flash a number (i.e. dial and hang up before the call is answered) in order to be registered on the system. Midwives can also use phones to register expectant mothers onto the system. Each week, each mother will automatically receive a few calls in her own language with information on the stage of her pregnancy, and suggestions to keep her and her baby healthy. This information is also intended to counteract traditional beliefs that often prevent women from accessing medical help, even in deadly situations.

Every voice subscriber can opt to also receive the information via SMS so that it is stored on her phone. If she needs to hear the message again, she can make a toll-free call back to the same number that will let her listen to previous messages.

The project also includes setting up Maternal Health Corners in each of the facilities. The Maternal Health Corners are made up of a set of computers that have been programmed with content (audio, video and text) for the benefit of health workers. Video content has been developed by the Global Health Media Project and has been well received by health workers.[2]

Further, the project has instituted a monthly block knowledge sharing session that brings together all expectant mothers registered at a facility for information sharing in a group. These sessions are led by local midwives or community health workers.

We are currently funded by STAR-Ghana http://www.starghana.org/ for 2 years. We are also working with Voto Mobile, a bulk SMS provider that has worked with us to develop the system to be able to transmit audio messages to the expectant mothers.

A monitoring and evaluation framework is in place and data collection will begin shortly. The system is designed to self-monitor. For example, when a message is delivered, we are able to track if the call was picked up or not and if it was picked up, whether the expectant mother listened to the message in full or in part. We are currently working on feedback questions that will be recorded and sent out at intervals to get feedback from the expectant mothers.

2. http://globalhealthmedia.org/page/2/





CHALLENGES

1. The system is dependent on midwives collecting and uploading information on expectant mothers onto the system for delivery of messages, but these midwives have inadequate knowledge of ICT. Additionally, some of them see this as extra work and demand incentives. The team is currently discussing this issue and hoping to find a lasting solution. In the meantime, a small budget has been allocated to provide incentives to the midwives responsible for assisting with registering expectant mothers. Savana Signatures has also planned a series of ICT training sessions for the health workers. One has been conducted already and the next batch of health workers will be trained in the month of September 2013.

2. Information from the health facilities indicates that most expectant mothers either do not own phones or have shared phones, making it challenging to register them. In addressing this, we have a monthly block knowledge sharing session where these women can acquire some knowledge from their friends as well as their midwives if they do not have personal phones. Illiteracy is also prevalent amongst our target demographic but we have found that those who have access to phones have basic knowledge of which keys to press for the basic phone functions.

FUTURE PLANS

1. To scale up this project to other districts or towns:

   Currently we have engaged with the Regional Health Directorate with plans of working on how to engage with other government bodies for scale up and adoption. Enrollment has only recently begun and so far 100 expectant mothers are registered in the messaging program.

2. To introduce a system that would remind expectant mothers when they are due to attend antenatal care.

3. To add a special feature of this program that would use a flashing system to allow expectant mothers to flash a number to get connected to a midwife in any of the participating health facilities:

   The midwife could provide maternal health information in real time and address specific questions and concerns that might arise from the messages. This helpline is seen as one of the best ways to allow the expectant mothers to privately discuss issues with their midwives that they would never have brought up during the antenatal session. It will also allow prompt response or immediate help when an expectant mother is confronted with some irregularities at any stage of her pregnancy. It is our hope to secure funding one day for this.

Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action

The MAMA Community Spotlight series shines a light on some of the great work being done by organizations using MAMA's adaptable mobile messages. Each month we feature a new organization that has downloaded our messages and is using mobile technology to improve maternal, newborn and child health.

Inspired by these innovative programs? Download the MAMA messages for yourself by visiting www.mobilemamaalliance.org and completing our short questionnaire.

For inquires about working with our partnership, contact:
MAMA Global
tel: 202.887.9040
email: info@mobilemamaalliance.org

Media Inquiries, contact:
Mabinty Koroma
tel: 202.862.6315
email: mkoroma@mobilemamaalliance.org

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