



VillageReach Receives New Grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to Improve Health System Data Visibility at the “Last Mile”

VillageReach to partner with University of Washington to transform paper data into a scalable digital system through ODK Scan.

SEATTLE, Washington, October 10, 2014– VillageReach, a Seattle-based non-profit that develops, tests, implements and scales global health innovations, has received a \$470,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to further develop and enhance ODK scan, part of the Open Data Kit suite of data tools in partnership with the University of Washington’s Department of Computer Science and Engineering. ODK Scan is an Android application that digitizes data on paper forms, using a device’s built-in camera and image-processing technology.

VillageReach has been collaborating with University of Washington’s Department of Computer Science and Engineering since 2011 to develop the project, including the initial pilot, also funded by the Gates Foundation. Through ODK Scan, VillageReach and the University of Washington seek to leverage the growing supply of lower-cost smartphones to bridge the gap between the mHealth movement, focused on digitizing all content, and the current paper-based health data collection systems that prevail in low-income countries.

Many rural and/or low-income communities worldwide have insufficient information technology systems to translate paper data to digital format for statistical analysis and aggregation. ODK scan, which can automatically recognize and digitize fill-in bubble, checkbox, number, and QR code data, is a practical and low-cost mHealth solution for translating paper-based systems that currently prevail in low-resource countries to digitized health data. Functional application of ODK scan will enable a more efficient paper-to-digital process, with potential to significantly improve communications by illuminating data through to the “last mile” of the health system. Improved data visibility will allow for more timely and accurate decision making by health supply chain managers, immunization officers, and other health officials at the higher levels of the health system who often experience significant challenges when it comes to receiving and analyzing data from paper-based systems.

The grant will fund the packaged beta release of the application and further enhancement of the optical mark recognition (OMR) technology, and will support in-country field test implementations and engagement with health ministries in relevant areas. Field testing will be conducted in multiple countries yet to be determined.

About VillageReach

Through collaboration with public and private sector partners, VillageReach seeks to increase access to quality healthcare for the world’s most underserved communities, bringing life-saving innovations to scale and sustainability. VillageReach develops, tests and implements and scales innovations that uniquely address key barriers at the lower levels or “last mile” of healthcare delivery in low-resource communities including healthcare accessibility, human resource constraints, data visibility and lack of infrastructure.

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