

CHIPATALA CHA PA FONI – JUNE 2012 UPDATE

In 2011, VillageReach, in partnership with Concern Worldwide’s *Innovations for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health* initiative (“*Innovations*”), the Malawi Ministry of Health, and local technology organization Baobab Health, launched *Chipatala cha pa foni* (Health Center by Phone) in Balaka District of Malawi. This service is part of an innovative pilot to test how information and communication technology (ICT) can provide women and families in Balaka District with a reliable means of accessing health information and care, and support and extend the public health system. The project also provides the health sector with practical information that can be used to improve client management and quality of care.

Balaka is among the poorest-performing districts in Malawi in relation to maternal and child health outcomes. Women and children must cross long distances and difficult terrain to reach facilities, often confronting long wait times upon their arrival. This, in turn, results in women choosing to forgo critical health visits. The *Innovations* pilot tests the capacity of a toll-free hotline to help prevent avoidable and last minute emergencies, as women can access maternal, neonatal and child health advice from trained and supervised staff based at Balaka District Hospital. For supplemental information, an automated tips and reminders service for subscribed pregnant women and families of children under five provides personalized health messages that support timely and appropriate care seeking and health practices.

Since its launch in August 2011, *Chipitala cha pa foni* has averaged 525 calls per month from pregnant women and caregivers of children under one. The service has just under 6,000 registered users, with more than 3,000 receiving weekly tips and reminders regarding their pregnancy or the health of their young children.

Figure 1: Hotline Calls by Month

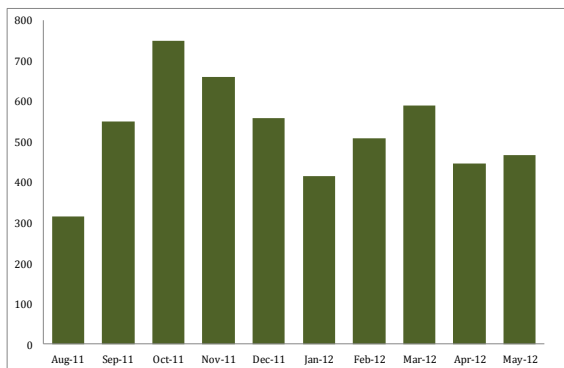
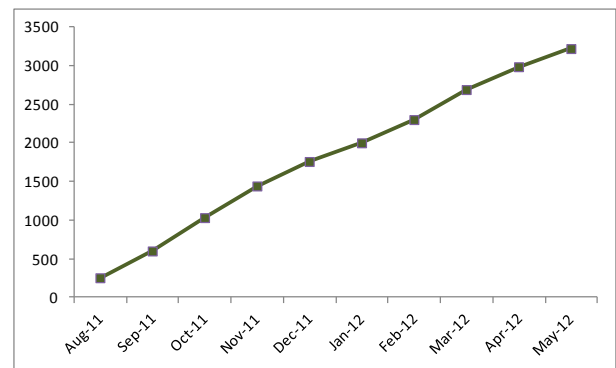


Figure 2: Tips and Reminders Subscribers



The *Innovations* pilot project in Balaka is unique in taking a multi-pronged approach to addressing the spectrum of care-seeking needs among mothers and children, from prevention to treatment. In light of human resource constraints within the health sector, as well as limitations in physical access to health facilities, the project will provide insight on how technology can be used to drive community demand for health care, promote appropriate household and community-based management of common health conditions in women and children, and foster more positive interactions between communities and the formal health system, all of which are mediating factors in achieving high coverage of life-saving interventions for women, infants and children in Malawi.

A baseline study was conducted in 2011 by Invest in Knowledge Institute (IKI), and an endline study will be carried out in the end of 2012/early 2013. Qualitative ethnographic data about the experience of residents with the hotline is also being collected throughout the course of the project. The partners will share more of the findings from these studies and the impact of the pilot over the coming year.

For more information on the project, visit the [*Innovations in Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health website.*](#)