



Zambia Landscape Analysis Results

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Ministry of
Health



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VillageReach Contact:

Jessica Mayenda

Senior Manager & Solution Lead, HCBP

Digital Solutions Global Technical Team

E-mail: jessica.mayenda@villagereach.org

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to reach everyone.*

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Introduction

Health Center by Phone (HCBP), a telehealth platform that engages callers through voice calls, Interactive Voice Recordings (IVR), Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) and AI chatbots, was first co-created with the Malawi MoH and strategic partners to help communities make informed health decisions through consistent access to health information, and allow the MOH use information collected through the platform to better track various disease verticals, healthcare service follow-up and service quality. This landscape analysis aims to provide a comprehensive overview of telehealth in Zambia and evaluate the feasibility of replicating the HCBP model in the country.

Objectives

This analysis of the telehealth landscape in Zambia aims to meet the following objectives:

- **Identify Key Stakeholders:** To identify and categorize key stakeholders within the telehealth sector in Zambia.
- **Evaluate Existing Telehealth Infrastructure:** To assess the current state of telehealth infrastructure in Zambia.
- **Determine Ministry of Health Requirements:** To ascertain the specific requirements and expectations of the Ministry of Health in Zambia regarding the implementation of a telehealth solution like HCBP.

Methodology

The landscape analysis has been carried out through extensive engagements and interviews with key stakeholders in the telehealth sector. Stakeholders include entities operating in the telehealth space and hotline providers. Valuable insights and information have been gathered through these interactions.

Key Findings from Stakeholders

In-depth stakeholder engagements have revealed the following critical findings:

- **Isolated Projects:** Numerous telehealth projects are operating in siloes, often without government visibility, leading to fragmented efforts and limited coordination.
- **Data Discrepancies:** Partners managing call centers frequently do not share data with the government. This results in the omission of essential information hindering effective tracking and response planning.
- **Missed Opportunities:** Some call centers have the capability to track epidemic responses and pandemic preparedness. However, they face challenges due to the lack of user-friendly dashboards, making efficient data triangulation difficult.
- **Platform Deficiencies:** The Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPHI) operates its call center without a dedicated platform, limiting its ability to monitor disease outbreaks and respond promptly, especially during significant incidents.
- **Lack of Healthcare Worker Database:** There is currently no centralized database containing updated contact information for healthcare workers in Zambia. This deficiency hampers the timely dissemination of crucial information to safeguard both healthcare workers and the public.

Stakeholders Profiles and Insights

The landscape analysis engaged various stakeholders, each contributing valuable perspectives:

MINISTRY OF HEALTH - ICT DEPARTMENT

1. **Role:** Representatives from the ICT department at the Ministry of Health.
2. **Involvement in telehealth:**
 - The ICT department is working to operationalize the digital health strategy in Zambia.
 - They are very interested in understanding all players in digital health and telehealth. They highlighted working in siloes as one of the biggest challenges, which led to wasted resources.

INSTITUTE FOR DIGITAL HEALTH

1. **Role:** Role: The visionary leaders at the Institute serve as experts in telemedicine, healthcare informatics, and mobile health applications, actively steering innovation. Their influence is pivotal in guiding the Institute toward the forefront of advancements in the healthcare landscape.
2. **Involvement in telehealth:**
 - The leaders have developed comprehensive plans that seamlessly integrate telehealth solutions, aligning these initiatives with Zambia's healthcare goals to enhance access and quality.
 - Collaborations with a diverse range of partners have resulted in the creation of innovative tools, empowering healthcare providers through remote consultations and real-time monitoring.
 - Their engagement with policymakers involves advocating for supportive regulatory frameworks, ensuring the ethical and privacy-conscious integration of telemedicine into the healthcare system.
 - The Institute has undertaken extensive community initiatives to educate professionals and the public, fostering a deeper understanding and trust in telehealth services.
 - Notable hotlines identified through their efforts include Avencion, CIDRZ, Pamodzi Eastern Provincial Health Office, ZNPHI, and DMMU, showcasing the Institute's commitment to establishing strong connections within the healthcare community.

INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH MEASUREMENT (IHM) - SMARTCARE

1. **Role:** Representatives from IHM, focusing on the implementation of Smart Care, a system tracking patient information.
2. **Involvement in Telehealth:** Shared experiences and challenges faced during the deployment of patient information tracking technologies. IHM is currently not working on any telehealth initiatives but is open to see how Smart Care can be integrated into HCBP.

CHILDLINE/HELPLINE

1. **Role:** Childline plays a pivotal role as a national call center, functioning as a crucial lifeline for children across Zambia. Their commitment to child welfare is evident through a comprehensive and empathetic approach, addressing a wide array of issues faced by children and adolescents. By providing free phone, text, and web-based counseling services, Childline ensures accessibility for children in need of psychosocial support and referral services.
2. **Involvement in Telehealth:** Childline's involvement in telehealth is multifaceted, encompassing a broad range of critical services and strategic initiatives:
 - **Scope of Services:** Childline's services cover a diverse range of critical topics, including violence against children, online safety, bullying, substance abuse, mental health, neglect, child marriages, physical and emotional abuse, education, child trafficking, child labor, and HIV and AIDS-related issues. Counseling services are tailored to individual needs and are available in both English and Zambia's seven local languages, accommodating the linguistic diversity of the country. Callers can choose counseling from female or male counselors, ensuring comfort and freedom of expression.
 - **Operational Challenges and Solutions:** Operational challenges, primarily stemming from reliance on donor funding, have been met with innovative solutions. During funding gaps, volunteer counselors have been deployed to ensure uninterrupted service provision.
 - **Recognizing the need for sustainable funding,** Childline has explored partnerships with the government, suggesting strategic approaches such as having counselors on the government payroll to ensure stability in staffing and operations during financially challenging periods.
 - **Expanding Reach and Equity:**
 - Childline is committed to equity, expanding its services to the most vulnerable, including refugee children who have been abandoned or lost their relatives.
 - Proactive engagement with detention centers, offering translation services and counseling in languages such as Amharic, French, Lingala, and Arabic, showcases Childline's dedication to inclusivity and ensuring accessibility to every child, regardless of their circumstances.
 - **Integration with HCBP:** Childline expresses keen interest in integration with the Health Centre by Phone (HCBP) once operationalized. This collaboration aims to enhance the reach of their services and provide a framework for financial stability through recognition by the National Health Insurance Management Authority (NHIMA). Formal acknowledgment would enable Childline to raise funds autonomously, further bolstering its sustainability and outreach efforts.

PATH

1. **Role:** Path has multiple digital health projects and works very closely with the Ministry of Health in implementing the digital health strategy.
2. **Involvement in telehealth:** Explored partnership opportunities and discussed digital health initiatives, emphasizing potential collaboration areas. The path is working on a CHW training platform and has no telehealth initiatives but is very open to seeing if this sector is something they can invest in. They have created apps and chatbots in the past, but it is usually for local organizations who apply for grants.

AIRTEL ZAMBIA

1. **Role:** Airtel is the largest mobile network operator in Zambia based on their subscriber base and operates multiple call centers on their network.
2. **Involvement in telehealth:** Airtel has several call centers operating on its network, but the focus areas for these hotlines are not specified. Airtel charges a fee for organizations that want to operate a hotline on its network. The fee varies depending on the type of hotline and the number of calls that are expected to be handled. Airtel also provides a service at a fee for anyone who wants to run a hotline. This service includes setting up the hotline, providing the necessary infrastructure, and managing the calls.
 - About its dealings with the government, Airtel does not charge for toll-free lines that are requested by the government through an SI from the cabinet. This is the case with all Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) when working with the government. The key stakeholder to engage over setting up a hotline is ZICTA, as they are the regulators who will authorize the hotline/Toll-free line to be set up. ZICTA is responsible for regulating the telecommunications industry in Zambia and ensuring that all operators comply with the relevant laws and regulations.
 - To set up a hotline, an organization must first contact ZICTA and obtain the necessary authorization. Once the authorization has been obtained, the organization can then contact Airtel and discuss the details of setting up the hotline. Airtel will then provide the organization with the necessary infrastructure and support to operate the hotline.
 - Airtel's hotlines are an important part of its commitment to providing quality customer service. The company is constantly looking for ways to improve its hotlines and make them more accessible to customers.
 - Airtel operates several call centers and provides the necessary infrastructure for hotline operations, highlighting the need for collaboration with major mobile network operators.

ZAMBIA NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE (ZNPPI)

1. **Role:** ZNPPI initiated a call center in 2017 during the Cholera outbreak and reactivated in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The call center operates 24/7 with four agents per shift, focusing on pandemic preparedness and epidemic response.
2. **Involvement in Telehealth:**
 - The call center, while currently not running on any platform, receives reports of disease outbreak-related incidents from communities.
 - Despite the absence of dashboards, ZNPPI utilizes data from DHIS2 and other MOH dashboards for immediate response.
 - A proposal aims to scale ZNPPI Hotline & Telemedicine as a MOH-integrated hotline and telehealth solution, introducing trend analysis for epidemic and pandemic identification.
 - ZNPPI is agreeable to scaling to all MOH, possessing the capacity, experience, and funding to run the call center.
 - The institute would further want the call center to include a tailor-made helpdesk management system for electronic Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response system (eIDSR) for management of technical incidents from users (software and Hardware). The system is used countrywide from facility to national levels.

- There is also need to for the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) to have a view of the call center data and or dashboards.

Risks & Mitigation

Risks	Mitigation
<i>Policy Knowledge Gap and Coordination</i>	Engage legal experts and stakeholders to develop clear policies. Establish regular collaborative sessions among stakeholders. Ensure continuous training to enhance understanding. Regularly review and update policies. Incorporate legal safeguards for patient data privacy and liability.
<i>Silos in Project Implementation</i>	Create a technical working group that focuses on telehealth and encourages inter-agency communication and collaboration. Implement a centralized reporting system for telehealth projects. Facilitate regular meetings to share progress and challenges. Foster a culture of openness and information sharing among partners.
<i>Lack of Data and Dashboard</i>	The Health Centre by Phone (HCBP) solution is designed to integrate a built-in Virtual Analytical Network (VAN) and feature live dashboards.
<i>Absence of Updated Healthcare Worker Database</i>	Create a centralized database for healthcare worker contact information. Implement regular updates and verification processes. Develop a communication system to reach healthcare workers with timely information.
<i>Inadequate Platform for Disease Outbreak Tracking</i>	Implement a suitable platform for ZNPHI call center. Invest in technology infrastructure for efficient disease outbreak tracking. Ensure real-time data collection and reporting capabilities.