

MomConnect: The Potential of a National mHealth Program for Pregnant Women to Unlock Improvements in Maternal and Infant Health

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Mexico City 19 October 2015



MomConnect: Conceptualisation

- **South Africa** has significant avoidable maternal and child mortality and will not achieve MDGs for MMR and u5MR.
- Under **strong political leadership of SA Govt & Minister of Health** a number of initiatives formulated to assist in progressing towards MDGs and beyond to SDGs.
- One of these is **mHealth “MomConnect”** aiming to **strengthen health system** in a number of ways.
- **MomConnect built on:**
 - Very **strong political support and leadership** of the national DOH
 - **Mhealth programmes already in place in SA** (most importantly MAMAs programme where messages and systems for sending functional)
 - **Harnessing support of a range of stakeholders** including funders, technical experts, mobile network operators, training partners – **is a true PPP**



MomConnect Aims: a four legged pot

- **Strengthen information systems:** To introduce a mechanism for registering electronically all pregnancies in the public health system as early as possible using unique ID number.
- **Strengthen demand side of health system:** To send targeted health promotion messages to these pregnant women to improve their health and that of their infants – built on experience of Mamas SA.
- **Strengthen demand and supply:** To provide pregnant women with an interactive mechanism to feedback on the service they have received.
- **Strengthen supply:** To empower and support nurses with regular content; encourage study and peer support groups; provide feedback mechanism for nurses to make suggestions



MomConnect: Achievements

- In first 13 months of operation **over 500,000 women** linked to MomConnect. Using unique number of facility where registered enables **each woman to be linked to a specific facility**
- Over 3000 compliments and 500 complaints received at help desk with ratio of 6:1
- More than 180,000 routine questions answered
- **Complaints fed back** via relevant managers down to facility and followed up to ensure that problem addressed.
- **Example of improvements in health system quality** include alerts of drug stock outs (e.g. iron) which has led to improvements in overall supply chain



MomConnect: Feedback examples

“Complained that she is HIV+ and was not given any medication during labour to prevent mother to child HIV transmission”

“Alleged that nurses have no respect for pregnant women and the use of vulgar words when addressing them”

“Lack of iron supplements “

“Waited for hours on end for HIV counselling while the nurse who was supposed to counsel them was busy cleaning”

“Claimed that the pregnant moms were treated badly in an antenatal session when they could not give correct answers about breastfeeding”

“Been at the clinic from 0750am until 14h00 the clients were not yet seen and all the nurses went for lunch at the same time”



MomConnect: The future

Overall **formal evaluation being done** by independent academic institutions

Operational research shows :

- **98% of mothers found the messages helpful,**
- **70% wanted more messages a week,**
- **77% felt better prepared for delivery**
- **81% shared their messages with partners, friends and family**
- **Network issues and time-outs are a barrier to MomConnect registrations.**
- **Staff generally had a positive perception of MomConnect and thought it was a beneficial program to mothers.**

Extending messaging to partners, children up to age 5. Also to cater for needs of specific needs especially HIV



MomConnect: The future (2)

- Reviewing messages with support from MAMAs and Baby Centre
- Moving to data (from SMS) as smartphone coverage increases; integrate with electronic patient record system
- Improving functionality of Help Desk to further support women as well as to get supply side to respond to complaints and address these
- Extend support and empowerment of nurses through having mobisite with materials available; access to online support
- Ensuring sustainability by:
 - Reducing operational costs of MNOs
 - Mainstreaming budget into routine DOH



Thank you
Gracias

