Readiness assessment to use of digital tools to deliver rural health community services among Lubombo region community-based health voluntary workers in Eswatini in 2022

Thabo Hlophe John Myeni

The Global Health Network

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Community based health volunteers (CBHVs) are accepted and respected within their communities in their role in decentralizing access to primary healthcare to communities. To optimize RHMs’ functioning, there has been a need to use digital technology to render services including sending messages reminders for appointments to clients; routine improve data management and appropriate pandemic response and other essential healthcare services at the community level, while also improving effectiveness of the community-based health services. The Rural Health Program in Eswatini plans to procure tablets to be used for the project. The project to be first piloted in one regions of the country was informed by a readiness to use digital tools to deliver health services in communities of Eswatini. An assessment tool was administered among all 768 CBHVs in the 13 Chiefdoms of the Lubombo region in the country. The list of variables that are enablers included age, education level, current use of smart phone, access to electricity, perceived safety status and distance to nearest health facility. About 107 (14%) come from one chiefdom while the rest are distributed in the other chiefdoms. About 98% of the are female. Respondents’ age ranged from 28 to 64 years, with median age of 51 years. Four (1%) had no education, while 19 (2%) had adult non-formal education, 357 (47%) had primary education, 380 (50%) had high school education, and 5 (1%) had tertiary education. About 89% had electricity at home for charging the tablets. On current use of own cell phones; 99% for calling, 53% for SMS, 47% for WhatsApp, 15% for Facebook and 12 for Google. About 47% reported that the nearest health facility is less than 5KM. About 85% perceived to be safe from mugging while 15 reported otherwise. The assessment results revealed the pertinent issues that the program needs to take into consideration before the rollout of the digitation project. Some of the those considerations include capacity building, security and provision of charging facility for the tablets.