Health Service Rating System (HSRS)
Empowering Tanzanians to rate the quality of health services

BACKGROUND

Patient experience is a core component of quality healthcare, and the ability to provide feedback on an experience – and to read about the experiences of others when making decisions about where to seek healthcare – is an important feedback loop in the healthcare system. When patients know where quality healthcare can be found and providers have direct insight into what needs improvement, the system as a whole can advance. For this to take place, however, healthcare users and

HSRS and DLIIC team during a capacity building workshop

providers must be proactive not only in generating and collecting feedback but also in interpreting and using that data to inform actions.

The Health Service Rating System (HSRS) is an information system that allows patients to freely and transparently provide feedback on the quality of healthcare services they have received. HSRS will use a mobile application for smartphone users, Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) for feature phone users, and a web application for computers to enable patients to give a feedback on the quality of specific services they have received from a particular health facility. This will not only help healthcare providers improve their services but will also assist other patients in making informed decision on where they seek healthcare services.

PROBLEM

The ability of a patient to communicate their experiences with the quality of healthcare services – a process that is vital to the overall improvement of the healthcare system - relies on the existence of a trustworthy feedback mechanism. Currently in Tanzania, there is no transparent mechanism where patients and the general public can express their healthcare experiences and access the experiences of others. The only option at present - the suggestion boxes at the health facilities – lacks transparency and fails to provide any information to the community at large.

SOLUTION

HSRS will enable healthcare users and the public to freely evaluate healthcare services and access other users' feedback. Designed to increase transparency and accountability in the health sector by crowdsourcing feedback from patients, HSRS will provide community-generated health service ratings to users through their mobile phones and computers. The

system will include a mobile app for Android users, a USSD option for those using feature phones, and a web portal for internet accessibility.

PROCESS

To complement information gathered in academic and 'grey' literature reviews on healthcare quality and patient feedback, the HSRS team conducted 12 stakeholder focus groups with stakeholders including health professionals, health providers, and health services consumers and patients. Together, they represented the views and opinions of both users and providers of healthcare services. The needs that emerged from these focus groups are being used in the design, development, and testing of the HSRS system. As HSRS is readied for launch, the project team plans to conduct awareness-raising workshops and promote the system to the public through media campaigns, including through radio and television advertisement.
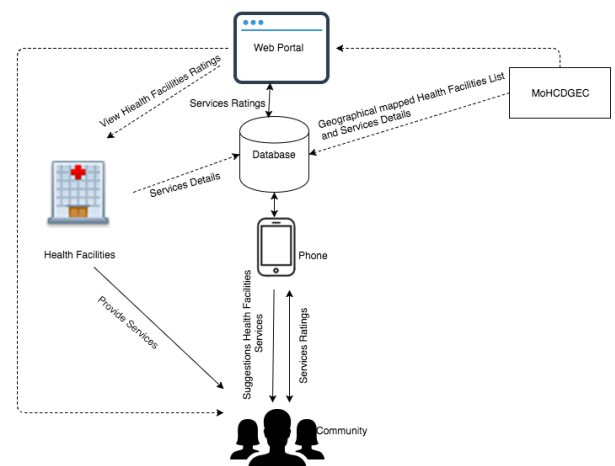
OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

Health Service Rating System (HSRS) will benefit the health sector and Tanzanian community at large.

- HSRS will provide patients and the public with more knowledge about the quality of care in a particular healthcare setting and empower them with choices and information.
- The Ministry of Health will be able to monitor performance and quality of healthcare services provided at the health facilities in the country.
- Health facilities will be incentivized to improve the quality of healthcare services provided at their centers as a result of competition among healthcare providers.
- The government and civil society organizations can leverage the ratings given to health facilities by the community as working information for policy and planning on the healthcare agenda.

KEY COLLABORATORS

Stephen Mangowi is an experienced developer leading a team of four in creating HSRS. They received a grant for their work from the Data for Local Impact (DLI) Innovation Challenge in March 2017.

The Data for Local Impact Innovation Challenge (DLIIC) is providing financial and technical support to this project. DLIIC is fostering data-driven innovations through small grant challenges for youth and entrepreneurs. Visit www.dlinnovationchallenge.com or follow DLIIC on Twitter @DLIinnovation for more information.