

Hulu Beteina Mobile App: mHealth Solution for Improved Health Information Access

Background: In 1998, Ethiopia recorded an estimated 25,000 total phone subscribers. Fast forward to April 2017; the total number of subscribers is over 55 million and rising. Across Ethiopia, almost half of households (49.86%) have access to a mobile phone.¹ Further, according to a recent DHS survey (2016), 27% of Ethiopian women own a mobile phone for personal use. These encouraging statistics suggest that access to mobile technology is steadily increasing, presenting a prime opportunity to leverage a rapidly expanding base of mobile phone users to improve maternal, neonatal and child health outcomes across the nation.

Purpose: Communication for Health is launching Hulu Beteina, a mobile health (mHealth) platform to support rural women and men during pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, delivery, and as parents of young children. Designed for use on both smart and basic phones, the approach invokes a simple, easy to navigate format containing relevant, engaging, and educational content.



Specific objectives of the mobile tool include:

- To improve knowledge, attitudes and practice of high impact health practices/behaviors related to reproductive, maternal and child health.
- To generate demand for and increase uptake of RMNCH services

The app aims to empower couples to take joint action for their family's health. The platform includes suggested actions to ensure a safe and healthy pregnancy, delivery and early childhood. Such actions might include attending early and completing antenatal care visits, choosing a family planning method, or a myriad of other small doable actions.

KEY FEATURES: Presently, key features of the app include:

- Works offline. No internet connection necessary
- Friendly, audio-based content modules
- Interactive tools, including a growth monitoring tool
- Notifications for key services including antenatal care visits, immunizations, etc
- Functions on feature phones (via SD card) and smart phones (via an app)
- Multiple languages (Amharic, Afan Oromo and Tigrigna)

Development process: In collaboration with the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health Maternal, Maternal and Child Health Directorate and a local private tech Start up, Communication for Health has undertaken a systematic process to develop, implement and evaluate Hulu Beteina. Insights from mini assessments and global learning from similar initiatives by CCP were used to help inform this client-based application design. A consultative content design workshop was organized to bring together CCP, FMOH technical teams, the IT developers and potential users of the application to identify key barriers and critical content for maternal, newborn and child health. A prototype of the mobile tool was pretested among the intended users and other potential partners (HEWs and Local shop owners) to capture their overall impression, usability and areas of improvement. Feedback has been very positive with a lot of interest in copying the app on their phones, considering it as a reliable source of information accessible at any place and time. As one of the FGD participants said, "it is like having a HEW at home."

Based on the results, the Hulu Beteina app has been finalized and is now ready for distribution.

¹ Communication for Health Project Baseline Report- April 2017