

MEETING ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION REPORTING TARGETS WITH KANO CONNECT

The importance of technology in healthcare is becoming increasingly evident. Health technologies have been recognized by foremost health forums such as the World Health Assembly as being indispensable for preventing, detecting and treating diseases. Introducing communication strategies and information technology into health delivery systems can improve the quality of healthcare, improve health and achieving health equity.

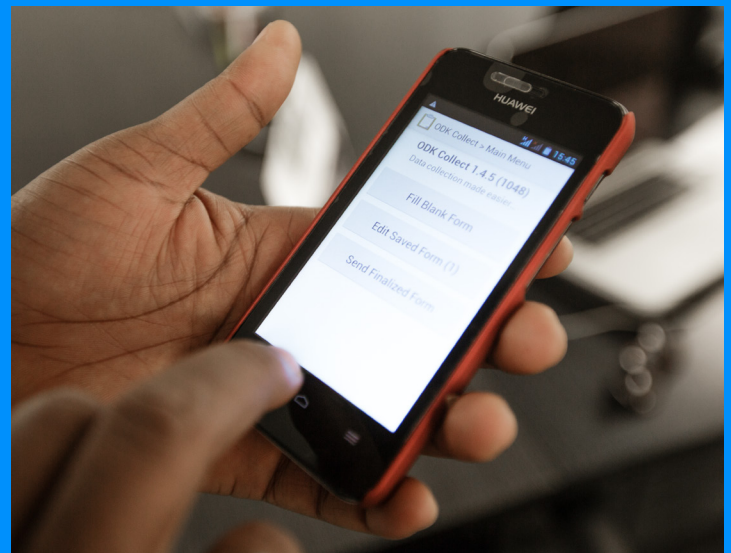
As the Routine Immunization Officer in charge of Bebeji Local Government Area (LGA) in Kano State, Rufa'i Rabi'u's primary focus is to make sure that Routine Immunization sessions run smoothly so that eligible children in his LGA can receive their vaccinations at the right time and complete the entire vaccination course without dropping out.

"I work with the LGA Monitoring and Evaluation officer to analyze weekly and monthly data collected from the Ward Focal Persons (WFPs) to identify specific patterns of noncompliance, low vaccination coverage, dropouts, and vaccine wastage. Once I have identified these trends, I develop and suggest coordinated strategies to address these challenges, improve RI demand and to increase immunization coverage"

- Rufa'i Rabi'u

Achieving this is dependent on his ability to communicate and share information with his fellow health workers. To obtain and validate the data from the wards, he makes several calls on a weekly basis to the 14 WFPs, health facility in-charges and his colleagues at the LGA level, often at his own expense. He also sends weekly reports relating to vaccine stock levels and vaccine utilization to the State Emergency Routine Immunization Coordination Committee (SERICC). These reports are critical because they also contain vital information about action points, recommendations or gaps identified during Routine Immunization Supportive Supervision (RISS) visits which need to be addressed promptly so that the RI sessions in the LGA can proceed as planned. He was often unable to submit his reports as at when due because of challenges with internet connectivity.

"At the end of each week, when my weekly reports were due, I had to use my personal phone and data as a hotspot. This cost me a lot of money and I would still spend most of my weekend at the office because of network delays or poor internet connectivity. It was quite frustrating because it was a persistent problem."



eHealth Africa and the Kano State Primary Health Care Management Board received funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) to design and implement Kano Connect, a mHealth platform that strengthens primary healthcare services through effective communication and information management. As part of the project, eHA provided mobile phones and internet data for selected staff of Kano state's health system including all the health facility in-charges, to enable them to send reports through their mobile phones and communicate for free within a closed user group. The reports, action points from supportive supervision visits as well as the GPS coordinates of the health facilities are stored on a dashboard which can easily be accessed and reviewed by managers for decision making.

This intervention completely transformed Rufa'i's work. By accessing the Kano Connect dashboard, he is now able to obtain and collate the data for his reports more quickly and efficiently. Having back-end visibility has also helped him to troubleshoot and address potential issues like stockouts or vaccine shortages before they arise. He monitors the vaccine stock levels of the facilities in his LGA through the dashboard and contacts the LGA Cold Chain Officer to supply vaccines to any health facilities that report low vaccine stock levels.

"Kano Connect has improved my work productivity. These days, I hardly need to contact the health workers to ask for data or to remind them to send reports because they can send reports easily from their phone. Even when I have to make calls, it's completely free."

Testimonials like Rufa'i's elucidate the positive impact that communication and information sharing systems like Kano Connect can make on health service delivery especially in low resource settings. Currently, Kano Connect is managed completely by the Kano State Primary Health Care Management Board with technical support from eHealth Africa.