

MOTIF - MOBILE Technology for Improved Family Planning Marie Stopes International Cambodia



An innovative mobile intervention using voice messages to support post-abortion counseling

About Marie Stopes International

Marie Stopes International (MSI) is an international NGO providing sexual and reproductive health services in 41 countries. Registered in Cambodia since 1998, MSI Cambodia (MSIC) works to empower Cambodian women to access family planning counseling, safe abortion and related sexual and reproductive health services.

The Problem

5% of Cambodian women age 15-49 have had an abortion, with 26% of these women having had more than one. Despite the risks associated with unsafe abortions, which are responsible for one in eight maternal deaths globally, only 35% of Cambodian women are using a modern method of contraception. This represents a significant unmet need for family planning since over 80% of Cambodian women report either wanting to wait at least two years for their next child or not wanting any more children. Such unmet family planning needs are a key factor contributing towards Cambodia's high rate of abortion.

The Challenge

Although MSIC already provides comprehensive post-abortion family planning counseling at the time when clients seek abortion services, less than half adopt an effective contraceptive method. MSIC was especially interested in developing an effective intervention that would offer additional counseling to its clients in the period following their abortion. Though MSIC recognizes the value and wanted to maintain a one-to-one counseling approach, the team was mindful of the financial and economic implications for a patient of having to travel to a health center for follow-up as well as of the sensitivities associated with contraception and abortion in Cambodia. Given the situation, the team was keen to investigate ways in which it could offer women more flexibility and privacy. With 80% of MSIC's clients reporting owning a mobile phone, mobile technology offered a powerful alternative for MSIC to reach out to its patients for follow-up and counseling.

Technical Profile

- Design Elements**
 - Health follow up
 - Counselor call back
- Call Direction**
 - Outgoing calls
 - Incoming call
- Verboice Features**
 - Call scheduling
 - Reg/Deregistration option
 - Call flow designer

The Solution

Using InSTEDD's Verboice platform, MSIC designed a semi-automated mobile phone-based intervention. This intervention relied on a pre-recorded voice message, which was sent out to MSIC's patients every two weeks over the course of the four months following their abortion. The pre-recorded message reminded patients that family planning methods are effective means to prevent unplanned pregnancies and provided them with the possibility to request a call back from a MSIC counselor. Less intrusive than direct contact from counselors, this approach gave patients the flexibility to seek support if and as desired while making it easier for MSIC to rationalize its counselors' time.

For more on Marie Stopes's work in Cambodia, please visit www.mariestopes.org.kh



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We were originally planning on using an SMS-based approach but when it came to field testing, it became apparent that a lot of our clients had never used SMS or were prevented from doing so by their limited literacy or their phone’s inability to handle Khmer fonts.
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The Design

When registering patients for follow up, MSIC asked patients for their preferred time of contact. Using this information and the Verboice scheduling feature, MSIC was able to schedule its calls at patients’ most convenient time. This increased the likeliness of the calls being successful and ensured maximum privacy for the patient.

The pre-recorded message that MSIC sent out was designed as a gentle reminder that individualized and confidential support was available if they so wished. After listening to a short introduction, patients were prompted to select, using their keypads, whether ‘1’ they wanted to be contacted by a counselor, ‘2’ they didn’t need any support at that particular time or ‘3’ they wanted to de-register from the program altogether. In order to help patients get familiarized with the approach, the same message was repetitively sent out throughout the four months of the program.

Results

MOTIF was evaluated with a randomised controlled trial. When surveyed after four months, the 249 women who received follow-up calls showed

a greater adoption rate of modern family planning methods than the 251 women who had not received the calls (provisional analysis shows an 18% increase of effective family planning use amongst women that received the intervention). Whilst the simple fact of receiving the calls may have had an impact on the women, several patients also used the message prompt to make contact with MSIC counselors. Requests for such callbacks were especially numerous during the first call (25.5%), and progressively decreased over time.

Next Steps

MSIC is currently reviewing this pilot intervention together with the Department of Population Health of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Using surveys, interviews, and the data collected as part of the Verboice call flow, the team is looking at assessing the effectiveness of this semi-automated mobile-supported follow-up model. Based on the findings of this research, MSIC may look at scaling up this model to a growing number of its patients and programs.



Verboice is a free and open-source platform that enables non-programmers to design and run a variety of interactive and automated voice-based applications (hotlines, alerts, reminders, quizzes, surveys, ...). Everything is done through a drag and drop interface which lets users combine Verboice’s several features into a multitude of different applications.

Open source; easy to use; highly customizable and scalable

For more information, please visit www.verboice.com