

**VillageReach
Trip Report
Lilongwe, Malawi
Feb 27-28, 2020**

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Intro:

VillageReach (VR) operates in three main countries: Malawi, Mozambique, and DRC. These countries have a limited infrastructure that impedes the access to healthcare for many of their citizens. VR works to fix the supply chain for much needed medicines and vaccines with the majority of its efforts being concentrated on the last mile. Finding sustainable and scalable solutions serving the hardest to reach and rural communities is the focus.

VR has three main areas of focus:

1. Health Workforce Development: Designing practical approaches to address human resource gaps and strengthen health worker skills.
2. Digital Health Technology: Developing technologies that improve communications and access to health data.
3. Supply Chain and Logistics: Implementing data-driven approaches for comprehensive supply chain improvement.

In Malawi, VR has implemented two main programs to address the needs there. First is the Pharmacy Assistant Training program for the proper training, distribution and stocking of necessary medicines. Second is the Health Center by Phone (CCPF) which is a call center that anyone in the country has access to and can call in for whatever health reason they may have. Both of these interventions directly help with getting healthcare and medicine to the maximum amount of people and into the hardest to reach of communities.

Programs:

Pharmacy Assistant Training – VR, working with the Malawi MOH, has been integral in the creation and maintenance of the PA training program. It is a two-year program with 10 months of hands-on practicum in health facilities. Five cohorts have been trained so far (447 students) with ~200 working in the health facilities. The goal is to have all 650+ health centers to each have a trained Pharmacy Assistant. They also have a mentorship program, where a PA takes a few people “under his wing” to pass on what they have learned in the extensive university program. This mentorship program may be a very useful way to further spread this key service.

100 new students can enroll annually. PA graduates work in 25+ of Malawi’s 28 districts. The PA’s assist with the overall management and availability of health commodities, tracking quality

and use for decision making through openLMIS (Logistics Management and Information System program) reporting, dispensing fidelity, and helping with the productivity and capacity of the community health workers.

With PA's the average score for dispensing quality improve, as did the better availability. The health workers and doctors at the health centers report substantial improvements in patient flow, decreases in waiting time, and relief from logistics and dispensing duties. They are the link between these smaller health centers and the governments central store of medicines.

Health Center by Phone (CCPF) - Chipatala cha pa Foni (CCPF) is a toll-free health hotline in Malawi that creates a link between the health center and remote communities. CCPF is staffed by trained health workers who provide information and referrals over the phone. Originally developed as a maternal and child health innovation, CCPF has evolved to become a general health hotline, covering all general health topics including nutrition and sexual and reproductive health in accordance with Ministry of Health guidelines. Through CCPF, women and caregivers can also sign up to receive voice reminders on maternal and child health topics specific to their month of pregnancy or their child's age. CCPF for Adolescents extends the platform for HIV prevention with youth friendly health services and information for sexual and reproductive health.

Key Takeaways:

- Pharmaceutical central store, run by the Malawi Ministry of Health, can seem hopeless but a lot of improvements can be made in distribution of commodities that make it from district level down to lower levels
 - They are running on an inadequate budget
 - Have put a stop to all sourcing of medicines from private hospitals/parties due to measures to clamp down on counterfeiting and corruption
 - This has caused country-wide stockouts and shortages
 - NGO donations of necessary medicines would be best way to remedy situation
- VR has successfully fortified the pharmaceutical supply chain but there are gaps with linking data systems at different hospital levels - potential issue in FP marketing data system expansion?
- VR recruitment is strong: staff have impressive levels of knowledge and experience
- May be better to fund expansion of Pharmacy Assistant mentorship program rather than Pharmacy assistant training program. Faster and cheaper with nearly the same impact?
- Ask about more funding opportunities in other countries; drones are an exciting funding opportunity if available
- Despite not having proactive door-to-door HSAs (CHWs), people are still receiving care
- VR is highly collaborative with government, partners (USAID), CHIC, etc.

Funding Opportunities:

1. Pharmacy Assistant Training Program
 - a. Technical advisory for two other training institutions
 - b. Replicate program in Tanzania
2. VR Pharmacy Assistant Mentor Program – launch in new districts
3. Bringing Open LMIS (district level commodity data) to health facility level - \$150K plus deployment costs, need to customize program to tablet version and procure tablets
4. CHW supply chain strengthening - integrate c-stock (village level commodity data) and Open LMIS (hopefully will be at health facility level if #3 is funded first)
5. Health Center by Phone
 - a. WhatsApp component in Malawi with AI learning built in to meet demand
 - b. Replicate program in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, DRC and adapted version in Mozambique (has existing hotline and messaging service but need fine tuning); selected as GAVI (global alliance for vaccine initiatives) infused pace setter – GAVI matches funding of \$1.5 million or above for replication but VR doesn't get money until they raise the match – trying to get match from Elma, etc.)

Visit Summary:

- Day 1: Met with Country Director Alinafe Kasiya and Senior Supply Chain Program Manager Matthew Ziba - visited a health center (3rd tier of 4 hospital levels) with a VR pharmacy assistant, a health center with no VR pharmacy assistant, and a health center with an outside VR pharmacy assistant acting as a mentor to the medical assistant/clinician. Also visited a village clinic (4th tier) run by a VR Health Surveillance Assistant (HSA/CHW).
 - This schedule allowed us to truly witness the difference having a trained PA can make. The quality and organization were clearly significant.
- Day 2: Met with Director of Programs Carla Blauvelt (former Country Director of Malawi), Director for Reproductive Health for The Ministry of Health and VR Trustee (Board member) Fanny Kachale, the Senior Manager for Advocacy and Communications, and Supply Chain Director Craig Usswald (by phone).
 - Visited the health center by phone (CCPF) right at the beginning of the hand off to the government. We saw the impressive technological system they were using to handle the wide variety of questions and health concerns they can receive at any time.



Elliott meeting with the VR staff and the PA (on right) at the first health center. The health center saw anywhere between 400-500 people per day.



The well-organized, air-conditioned pharmacy supply room. Despite how it looks, many essential medicines were missing due to gaps from the MOH.



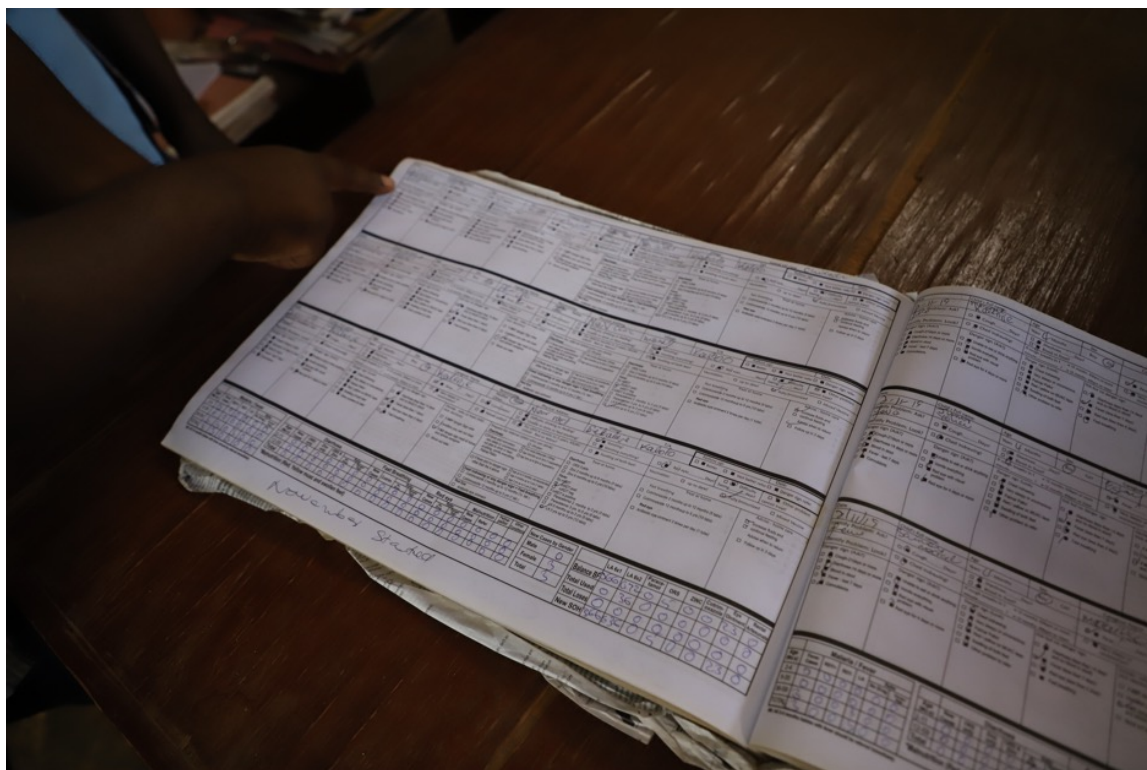
People waiting in line to receive healthcare.



Distribution in progress.



HSA in action in a much smaller/remote health center. Child received vaccine on the spot!



Patients' records and treatments received. Currently filled in by hand, but looking towards digital integration to help expedite accuracy and ease of medicine tracking.



Heath center without a PA. Located in closet of bat infested building and almost inaccessible.



They love showing off their diplomas as much as American doctors!!



Major stock out problems. This is health center that benefited from the mentorship program.



Seeing the government contracts for the CCPP health workers being processed live!

Chipatala Cha Pa Foni (CCPF) Services

Health and Nutrition Information for All





1 HOTLINE:
A toll-free health hotline staffed by trained health workers who provide Ministry of Health-verified information and referrals over the phone on all health topics including nutrition.

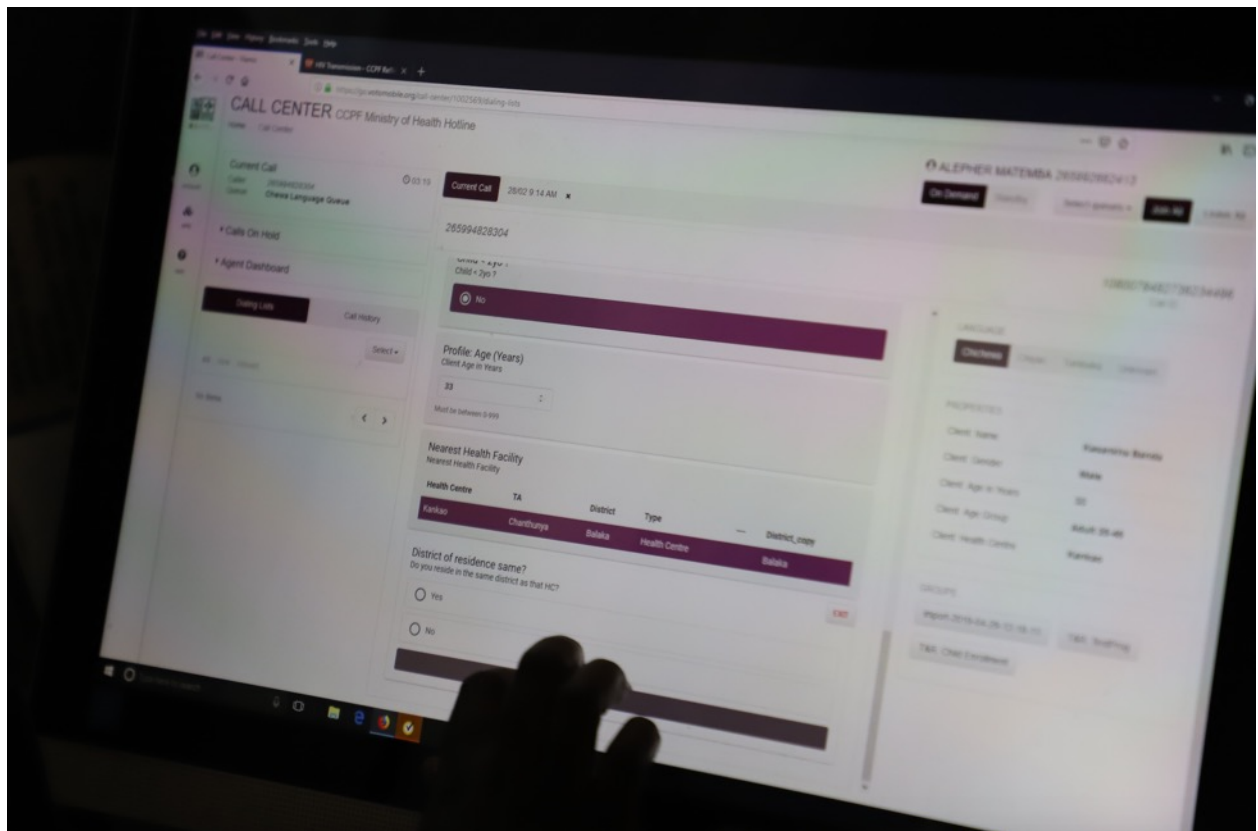


2 MESSAGE SERVICE:
Women and caregivers sign up to receive personal text or voice reminders on maternal and child health topics specific to their month of pregnancy or their child's age.



To access the service, individuals dial the short code **54747** to be connected.





Interactive program for fast and accurate healthcare service by phone.