



Development Practitioner at Work – Pamela Riley

Video Transcript

mHealth is important to all health programs, because the pervasive availability of mobile telephones in all the places where we work provide a very intimate and powerful channel to reach people that we haven't otherwise been able to reach.

mHealth is very popular with donors, as an intervention that has a lot of potential to reduce costs, to increase efficiency, to train and support health workers, to educate beneficiaries.

But once the donor funding ends, no one is picking up the costs. So, we are exploring different sustainability models, and one of the most promising is partnerships with mobile operators. The key there is that the partnership has to provide both partners with benefits, and too often, the development sector knocks on the door of the mobile company and says, "We'd really like discounted SMS or voice messages, because we're helping the poorest of the poor," and that is not a sustainable model.

We really try, when we're developing partnerships as we are with a company in West Africa, to look at how will this benefit the mobile operator over time, so that they continue to invest in the platform and help it reach the scale and impact that it can?

Mobile technology also enables the SHOPS project to increase the dialogue between the private and public sector. When we worked with the Ministry of Health in a Caribbean country, they were interested in collecting information on HIV indicators from their public health staff.

But we made it a point to include private providers in that data collection activity, and the private providers were willing to provide information for the first time to the public sector, because the technology made it easy, and they were able to get something in response, which was a reply from the Ministry of Health, letting them know what was going on in the country around the disease that they were collecting information on.

It was a way to facilitate dialogue and to increase engagement between the public and private sector.