



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2022



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to release our Quarter 1 Newsletter.

Kindly note that a newsletter is only as good as the content it contains, which is why we are reaching out to you for contributions.

The newsletter is an excellent opportunity to showcase your skills and give others insight into the amazing work that you do. It's also a great way to promote your personal brand and help our community stay connected.

Please feel free to submit your contributions, suggestions, or feedback, and they will be incorporated into the next edition. The Communications desk is open for submissions until the end of the month; **30th March, 2023**, so hurry and send your entries to **mnyirenda@r4hmw.org** or **+265 884 467 742**.

Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to receiving your contributions.

Best regards,

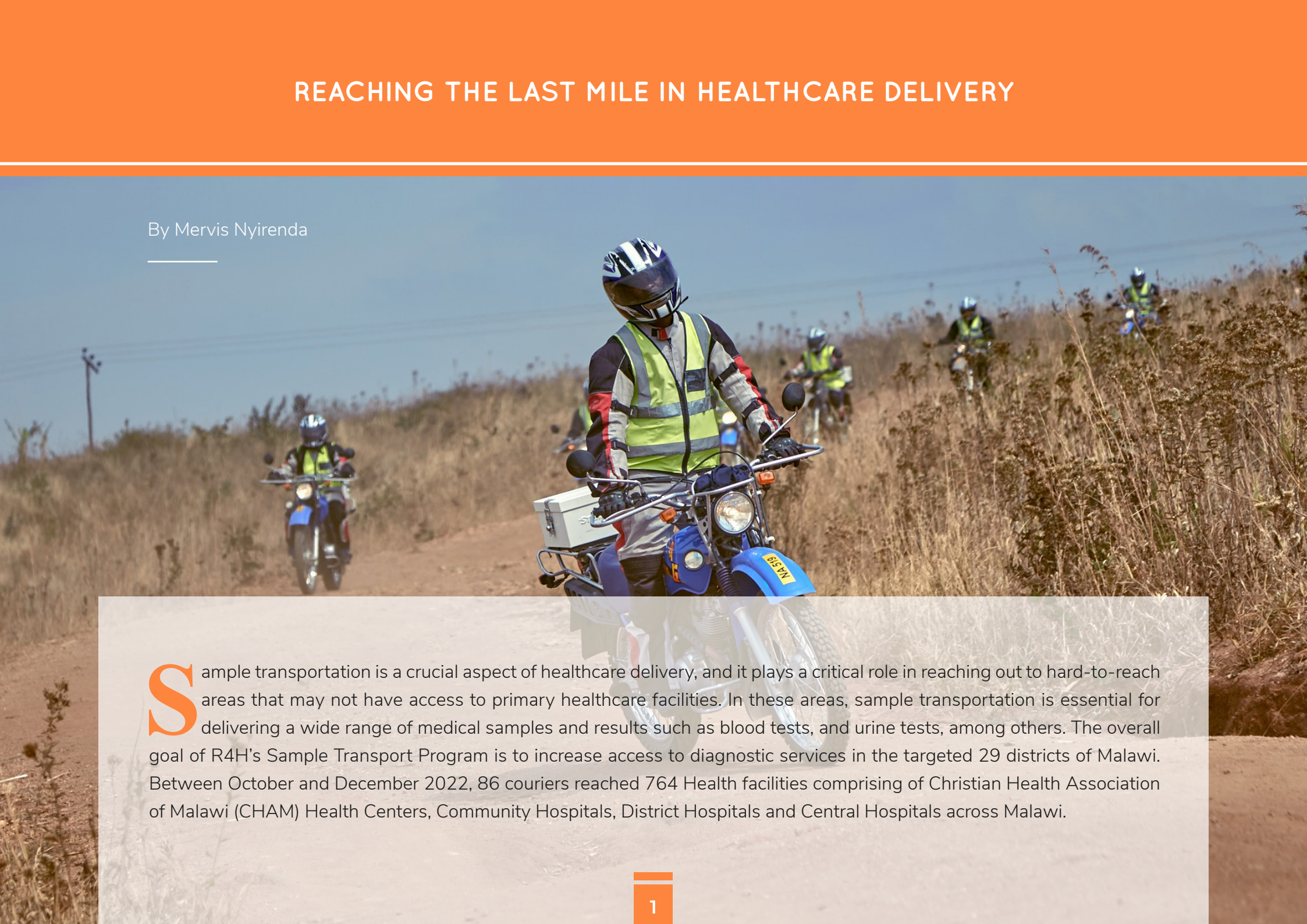
MEAL Team

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REACHING THE LAST MILE IN HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

By Mervis Nyirenda



Sample transportation is a crucial aspect of healthcare delivery, and it plays a critical role in reaching out to hard-to-reach areas that may not have access to primary healthcare facilities. In these areas, sample transportation is essential for delivering a wide range of medical samples and results such as blood tests, and urine tests, among others. The overall goal of R4H's Sample Transport Program is to increase access to diagnostic services in the targeted 29 districts of Malawi. Between October and December 2022, 86 couriers reached 764 Health facilities comprising of Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) Health Centers, Community Hospitals, District Hospitals and Central Hospitals across Malawi.



The use of Motorcycles in sample transportation by R4H has revolutionized healthcare delivery in remote areas that are difficult to reach by conventional means. Through the Sample Transport program, we have contributed to the improvement of healthcare services and disease control in the communities we serve. By providing timely transport for samples and results, we have helped to reduce the spread of infectious diseases and supported early detection and treatment of illnesses such as tuberculosis, HIV, and malaria.

Between October and December 2022, R4H transported **165,657** Samples and **117,870** Results cumulatively. Henceforth, R4H couriers covered **482,811** Kilometers, reaching 764 health facilities with no accident recorded representing 100% success rate.

In addition, R4H continues to transport samples and results from Drop-in Centers (DICs) under ST Program. R4H is transporting DIC Samples and results for 6 districts reaching 19 DICs. The districts are as follows; Lilongwe, Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, Blantyre, Mzimba North. The transported samples and results from the DICs are for the key population.

The importance of sample transportation is evident from the fact that without it, patients at the last mile may not get access to vital medical care that they need. Additionally, timely and efficient sample transportation can lead to faster diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of various diseases.

R4H remains committed to its goal of supporting sustainable development and promoting health and wellness in underserved communities. R4H will continue to work collaboratively with health facilities, government agencies, and other stakeholders to ensure that its transport program is effective and sustainable.

R4H & BWAILA ROTARY CLUB LAUNCHES POLIO FUNDRAISING

By Mervis Nyirenda



R4H staff posing with the president for Rotary Club of Bwaila, Lilongwe, Rotarians, Bikers anonymous and Lilongwe cycling crew.

R4H formerly known as Riders for Health in collaboration with Bwaila rotary club launched a polio awareness and fundraising campaign month which started on Monday, October 24 and ended on Saturday, November 26, 2022. Speaking in Lilongwe during the launch R4H Programs Manager, Lawrence Kachule said R4H will use riders to send polio messages to people and get donations through them.

“We have partnered with Lilongwe cycling crew and Riders anonymous in the campaign, these riders will be riding around Lilongwe and other parts of the country requesting people for donations to help in fighting polio,” Said Kachule.

President for the Bwaila rotary club Dr. Stella Kasirye said they thought of the ride to make people aware of the resurrection of polio in some parts of the world. Dr. Kasirye, who is also a Board member for R4H said the launch of the polio month will end with a big fundraising ride on 26th November 2022 from Lilongwe Gateway Mall to Nsaru and Kabudula trading centers and end at NRC.

“This ride is an opportunity to highlight both the plight of polio infection in our country and the roads that R4H couriers travel daily to ensure that samples and results are transported effectively, this contributes ultimately to better diagnosis, treatment, and long-term diagnosis for the Malawian patients,” commented Kachule.

“This was just a launch, bikers anonymous and Lilongwe cycling crew will assist us in collection of donations towards polio.” Said Dr Kasirye. In conclusion, she asked people to be cautious with polio and take their under five years children to vaccination centers which the government has introduced. One of the riders from Lilongwe cycling crew, Griffin Lameck said that the crew thought of partnering with the organizations as they also want to help in raising awareness on polio.

“We ride and meet with people, we decided to join this initiative to help in the humanitarian issues. It maybe someone today but tomorrow it might be me who may suffer from polio therefore we will ride for the cause.” Said Lameck.

PICTORIAL FOCUS
END POLIO AWARENESS CAMPAIGN - 22nd OCTOBER 2022



END POLIO AWARENESS CAMPAIGN LAUNCH- 26th NOVEMBER 2022



R4H Couriers & Staff posing with members of The Rotary Club of Bwaila, Lilongwe & Bikers Anonymous after a successful campaign.



R4H Couriers & Staff at Kabudula Market during the End Polio Campaign.

REVOLUTIONIZING HEALTHCARE WITH LOCAL ROUTE OPTIMIZATION

By Zwelithini Golowa

R4H has migrated to the local route optimization hosted at Public Health Institute of Malawi (PHIM) in Lilongwe from the route optimization system initially hosted on the MIT servers. This will ensure that the system continues to operate smoothly and efficiently, and that any necessary updates or adjustments can be made quickly and effectively.

Another key benefit of the local route optimization system is its ability to help healthcare providers reach patients more efficiently and quickly. By optimizing the routes that healthcare workers take, the system can help reduce travel time and costs, facilitate timely delivery of medications and supplies, and improve patient outcomes.

In addition, R4H will be working with other healthcare organizations in the region to explore the possibility of integrating route optimization system with E-Health systems. This will help to further streamline and optimize the healthcare delivery process, improving patient outcomes, and reducing costs.

Overall, R4H local route optimization system has proven to be effective in motorcycles fuel efficiency, reduced sample TAT, reduced empty trips, prioritization of high-volume sample facilities.

R4H will continue to play a vital role in improving the quality and efficiency of healthcare delivery in the region, and we look forward to expanding its reach and impact in the coming years and remain committed to leveraging technology to improve healthcare access and outcomes in Malawi and beyond.

MINIMIZING TURNAROUND TIME FOR POLIO SAMPLES WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF USSD REPORTING

By Lawrence Kachule



Hastings Buleya, MEAL Officer orienting health care workers on USSD Polio Stool Sample reporting at Mangochi Health center.

World Health Organization (WHO) through the Global Polio Eradication Initiative declared Malawi Polio free in 2005. In February 2022, the world woke up to the news that WPV1 outbreak had been confirmed for Malawi.

One key result of this event was assessment and strengthening Specimen Referral System (SRS), aimed at improving sample quality and timelines. R4H (Malawi) was engaged by VillageReach under Polio Lab Sample Transport program (PLST) transport AFP cases from Facility to Districts across the country and implement a USSD notification system. PLST is funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and aims at strengthening Malawi government polio sample transport system. In December 2022, R4H took a leading role in the technical delivery of USSD application to health care workers across the country through a training that was organized by EPI-MoH with support from Village Reach. During these trainings, the USSD tool for reporting Polio stool sample volumes was introduced to the participants followed by whitelisting of their phone numbers for them to be able to report sample volumes and a practical session for USSD sample volume reporting.

R4H led in the implementation of this Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) system for reporting volumes of collected polio stool samples from various health care facilities across the country, using specific predesigned codes for the first and second stool samples. Additionally, there is a specific code that health care workers are using to provide

feedback on any other technical issues with regards to reporting sample volumes using the USSD system.

The USSD Polio sample reporting system is critical for on-demand sample transportation it as sends out toll free sample and transport alerts to key stakeholders for their response and monitoring. This is key to ensuring that sample meet the required 72 hours to have the sample picked from any location in country and delivered at NICD laboratory in South Africa” Charles Matemba, Project Manager for Polio Lab Sample Transport at Village Reach.

Speaking on the initiative, Emmanuel Ngwira, Route Optimization Officer, R4H said “The USSD Polio Sample reporting has reduced empty trips and Turnaround Time, making it more effective and efficient as it guarantees assurance on the availability of samples reported and enhanced proper documentation of AFP cases at facility level”.

Apart from real-time Short Messages (SMS), the system also generates daily automated email messages that are dispatched to the national EPI, Village Reach, R4H, regional and district EPI officers on previous day’s reported sample volumes.

A database for health care workers currently involved in USSD reporting and Standard Operating Procedures for polio sample volume reporting were issued to all health care facilities by R4H.

A TAKE FROM OUR COURIERS



It has been 10 years since i joined R4H and this is a great opportunity to serve those Malawians in hard to reach areas who are in need of healthcare services. It is my pride and I have been empowered working as a courier in a male dominated field.

- Madalitso Ntonga Nkhoma [Mchinji]



I have been working with R4H for close to 10 years. My job involves transporting samples and delivering results. Some of the challenges I face include interruptions in sample processing in the molecular labs due to power problems. This job offers me a great opportunity to help people who are challenged due to their geographical locations to access healthcare services.

- Matthias Kelvin Semba [Nsanje]

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

SAMPLE TRANSPORT PROGRAM

Project Success

- R4H-RHD-I-TECH Partnership Development.
- Collaborated with Village reach on training health care workers on Polio stool sample collection and transportation.
- Prepared CDC R4H FY22 activity workplan.
- Optimized Sample Transport (OST) server migration from MIT to EGPAF.
- Developed Standard Operating Procedures for ICT and OST depts.
- Developed USSD reporting system for Polio stool samples.
- Prepared a scale up plan for OST to Mzimba North and Lilongwe districts.

Meetings

- R4H-RHD-I-TECH partnership development meeting.
- TB diagnostic network optimization with FHI360-IDDS, National TB Leprosy Elimination Program.
- Tech4med device demo call.
- Technical meetings with CDC, recurrent every wednesday.
- R4H board meeting.
- Zimbabwe-Malawi sample transport, experience sharing call.
- Wingcopter drone collaboration meeting with R4H.
- Rotary Club Lilongwe Bwaila – R4H Polio ride preparatory meetings.
- ABBOT – MoH call on molecular lab waste management.
- Parsyl device demo call.
- Laboratory diagnostics Technical Working Group (TWG).
- NGO board breakfast meeting at BICC.

- Waste management curriculum guidelines review meeting.
- ASLM ECHO Meeting.
- Central West TB Zonal Review Meeting.
- R4H-CHAM Monthly Partnership Coordination Meeting.
- Waste management curriculum guidelines review meeting.
- CDC IP Partners meeting.
- Abbot Malawi-CDC call.
- MERA Customer Affairs & Public Relations Manager.
- Meeting with DHA HIV Care & Treatment Program Officer.
- CDC Grants Management Training.
- CECAP TWG meeting.
- DHA HIV Care & Treatment Program Officer.

Trainings

- Attended Laboratory Risk Assessment and SOP development training.
- Attended CDC Grants Management Training.

Visits

- Attended CDC Facility familiarization visits.

DRIVING SCHOOL

Project Success

- A total of 13 Clients from October - December.
- Corporate training clients:
 - AIDS Health Foundation (AHF)-2 Trainees.
 - MONASO Trust-1 Trainees.
 - VSO - 3 Trainees.
- Kabaza trainees - 7.

Meetings

- Business Pitch meetings:
 - Land O' Lakes– Ronald Masoka & Kelvin Matola.
 - Feed the Future– Ronald Masoka & Kelvin Matola.

Activities:

- Juwao attended a big walk for Anti– Corruption Bureau with the Directorate of Road Traffic & Safety Services.

HR UPDATES

New Employees

- **Oris Omega**
Grants Officer, Lilongwe Office.
- **Mwayi Mbonyera**
Finance Officer, Lilongwe Office.

Promotions

- **Emmanuel Ngwira**
From Route Optimisation Field Assistant to Programme Officer, Route Optimisation.
- **Kumbukani Komakoma**
From Route Optimisation Intern to Programme Assistant Officer, Route Optimisation.
- Long term leave
Dalitso Mzunda from Jan – June 2023.

farewell

R4H

wishes you all the
best in your new
endeavors.

“ I am glad I had the opportunity to work with R4H in supporting its mission of making the last mile the important mile in healthcare delivery. I opted to join R4H because I have passion for helping people who are in need of health services. Having a health background and noticing the sample transportation problems faced in the Health sector, I took it as an opportunity to be part of the solution. I have worked with R4H for over 9 years, from (2012 - Dec 2022). ”

—— **Kufa Zgambo**



A TRIBUTE TO
STELLA MSISKA



Goodbyes are not forever. Neither are they the end. We are left with memories and marks of integrity which we look back to.

With deep sadness, We lost Stella Msiska on 24th December, 2022. Stella was working as a Program Assistant Officer for Route Optimization. She worked with **R4H** from 2018– 2022.

We will all remember Stella for her hard work, kind and calm spirit.

May her soul rest in peace.



PLANS FOR THE NEXT QUARTER

SAMPLE TRANSPORT PROGRAM

January
- March

- ST implementation for all 28 Districts.
- Monthly Program and financial reporting.
- Monthly Route schedule and fuel analysis.
- Optimised Sample Transport scale up to Mzimba North and Lilongwe districts.
- Implementation of quality management systems under ISO9000.
- Procurement of courier tablets and staff computers.
- National Laboratory Information Management System.
- CommCare integration rollout.
- Participate in resource mobilization activities.

