

Access to all Kano State health workers at my fingertips



Ahmad Usman Garba is the Zonal Supportive Supervision Program Officer (SSPO) for Nassarawa zone, one of the six zones in Kano state created by the state government for effective management of health programs. Nassarawa zone is made up of eight Local Government Areas.

Every month, he develops a work plan to guide supportive supervision in order to ensure that routine immunization activities go smoothly in his zone. The supportive supervision exercise provides first-hand information about how vaccines, cold chain equipment, and records are maintained at the health facilities. It is also a way to build the capacity of the LGA immunization team using a hands-on approach.

Before he was introduced to the Kano Connect platform, carrying out the supervision was a difficult job. To visit some facilities, the supervision teams needed to travel very long distances in difficult terrain even then, they were sometimes unable to see the LGA health facility workers.

“We don’t have a vehicle for supervision. Sometimes, we would get to the facilities after work hours and there would be no way to reach the LGA immunization team members. We would need to come back the next day.”

The supervision activity itself was carried out using a paper-based checklist which meant long hours spent collating and conducting analysis needed to take corrective action. In addition to this, there was no way to verify if a supervisor actually visited the LGA.

“People could fill the checklist and submit without even leaving their houses.”

Kano Connect is a mobile health platform developed by eHealth Africa, with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The platform is the official communication channel for Kano State Primary Health Care Management Board and contains a comprehensive health worker directory which houses contact details and relevant information about all health workers across all levels in Kano State's health system. Kano Connect also houses electronic information management tools such as RI supervision checklists and reports, enabling health workers to submit and review reports seamlessly. Health workers on the Kano Connect platform can access contact details of any staff and call or send SMS messages for free within a closed user group.

eHA was responsible for the development and integration of the communications and collaboration platform, including mobile and dashboard applications. eHA provided over 1400 android smartphones to the healthcare workers and provided training and technical support to the users of the platform. In 2016, the platform was handed over to the Kano State Primary Health Care Management Board. The introduction of Kano Connect has proven to be extremely helpful for Ahmad and his team.

"The Nassarawa zonal supportive supervision team is divided into teams of three. Four of us - Zonal LIO, Zonal CCO, Zonal Director and myself, use the Kano Connect Platform to conduct supportive supervision and so one of us will go with each team."- Ahmad Usman Garba

With Kano Connect, he can easily access the phone numbers of the LGA health facility workers and inform them of what day the supervision activity will take place. Another benefit that the platform affords Ahmad is that it makes the process of administering the checklist private.

"That's what I love best about Kano connect platform. All the health workers see is that I'm using the phone so they cannot see my questions. He has to tell the truth because he doesn't know what I'm doing; whether I am recording a video of him."

Kano Connect ensures that supervisors actually carry out the supervision exercise, thanks to the location feature which captures the GPS coordinates where the checklist is being administered from. Readily available contact information on the platform also helps him follow up on action points from the supervision visit as well as escalate, where necessary.

"When an action point is not addressed by the next supervision visit, it is very easy for me to escalate it because the numbers of the Zonal Director and Primary Health Care director are on the platform."

Kano Connect improves the quality of work at various levels of the healthcare system and how health services are delivered because reaching fellow health workers or superiors is very easy. Plans are currently in place to embed the geodatabases of designated locations on their Kano connect tools to further enhance supervisors' activities and improve efficiency in service delivery.