

Improving access to health care in Benin with goMediCAL



According to World Bank figures, 40 percent of Beninese people live below the national poverty line. This lack of financial resources may mean that they are unable to travel quickly to a hospital or to buy quality medicines.

The country's population stands at almost 12 million, of which 40 percent have a mobile-money account.

In 2017 a Beninese start-up, Open SI, launched goMediCAL, an application that aims to improve access to health care. In just one year, 33 clinics registered on the app and 1,800 customers started using it.



In just one year,



^a UN World Population Prospects, 2018.

^b BCEAO, Rapport Annuel sur les services financiers numériques dans l'UEMOA, 2018.

Solution

Open SI created goMediCAL, a mobile app that allows users to access a list of doctors and clinics and to make appointments with **more than 200 health professionals** for themselves or others. The app also enables users to share their medical records with doctors and to pay remotely for consultations.

The service offered by goMediCAL is complemented by a web application for clinics that contains patients' files and appointments (e.g. scheduling, cancellation, reports and reminders), information on specialist medical consultations, and mobile-money or bank/credit-card payments.

GoMediCAL is Benin's first health app that aims to have a complete value chain i.e. from health information and tips to digital payment and digital health.

The service has very low fees for customers, at US\$ 0.26 on average. This is negligible compared with the time and cost associated with unnecessary travel that the app can help avoid.

However, the unknown start-up faced several challenges such as the low rate of smartphone penetration and the need for more health workers to adopt digital technologies. Through its new digital strategy focused on innovation, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) is helping Open SI to address these challenges.

This is the process followed by a typical customer:



STEP 1:

Customer searches for a medical professional on the app.



STEP 2:

Customer books an appointment with the medical professional for themselves or for someone else.



STEP 3:

Customer visits the medical professional and can access their consultation record online and also share it with others.



STEP 4:

Customer pays via digital means such as a wallet or mobile-money or card payment.

Challenges

- **Improve** the goMediCAL solution by adding more features.
- **Roll out** the goMediCAL solution (through awareness, marketing campaigns and business activities) and have it adopted by the Benin population, especially vulnerable people.
- **Set up** partnerships with digital financial service providers (such as mobile-money operators) through which payments will be made.
- **Develop** the necessary partnerships with health service providers (clinics, pharmacies and physicians) and insurers. UNCDF could help Open SI to establish a solid reputation and credibility.

Project timeline



Results

In supporting this first mHealth project in West Africa, UNCDF had two main goals: to have a social impact by integrating more people into the health care system, and to increase digital financial transactions and financial inclusion. UNCDF recruited a health adviser to assist the start-up.

Open SI built a strong penetration strategy focused mainly on advocacy and awareness-raising among health workers. Using a technical service provider, UNCDF assisted Open SI to set up a sales force of eight recruits to strengthen the relationship with these doctors, clinics and hospitals.

As result, the number of patients using the service has increased by 60 percent in terms of customers, usage (i.e. number of appointments) has increased by 150 percent and about 40 percent more doctors have adopted the service.



60
clinics registered



320
doctors enrolled



250
appointments made every
day via the app



15,900
patients regularly use the app



“Before, I had to travel for between 60 and 75 minutes, and wasn't sure if I would be able to consult a doctor, as they are really busy. Now with goMediCAL, I can look for experts and book online to be certain that I have a confirmed appointment with the doctor. I save time and money, as I don't have to pay for travel any more. Also as my family lives far away, I can also book for them remotely and all they have to do is just go at the time of appointment.”

A PATIENT

DR. OLIVIER FRANCK YEDOMON, A DERMATOLOGIST-VENEREOLOGIST

“I had a chance to meet goMediCAL representatives during a session that they organized and I learned how the service would make life easier not only for the patient, but also for the doctor. As a patient, when I'm sick and I log on to the goMediCAL application, there are two advantages. Firstly, I have the option to search for a doctor, and secondly, I can get an appointment very quickly. Whereas for the doctor, the advantage is that he/she can keep track of the number of appointments and number of patients and can organize his/her day in the best way.”



“Today, we have better knowledge of the market. With our 250 doctors enrolled on the platform, we will now focus on patients and explore other segments,” says Open SI CEO and founder, Gilles Kounou. GoMediCAL will be deployed in other major cities of Benin such as Parakou and Bohicon, allowing it to reach more people.

Main lessons learned

- **Secretaries in hospitals and clinics** are the key people in prescribing the goMediCAL solution and they should be encouraged to do so.
- **Partnerships with organizations** with a large subscriber base (telecom companies, banks, insurance companies, etc.) will allow goMediCAL's end-user base to grow faster.
- **Although** young people are most likely to download and use the goMediCAL app, the main targets of the solution are families, single mothers and populations that rely heavily on diaspora support.

Looking forward

UNCDF has helped goMediCAL adapt its strategy and lessons learned from the pilot have inspired the start-up. In the coming days, Open SI will get closer to the public authorities, in order to strengthen the legitimacy of goMediCAL among the various actors in the health sector. The start-up will also include more communication campaigns in its strategy to reach the population outside Benin, especially the diaspora.



GILLES KOUNOU, CEO AT OPEN SI

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