



VaxTrac Benin: Lessons Learned 2013-2014

WE ENVISION A WORLD IN WHICH EVERY CHILD HAS ACCESS TO LIFE-SAVING VACCINES.

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

*VaxTrac works with frontline health workers to design and implement a mobile vaccine registry system. Throughout the lifespan of our project, we have identified lessons learned that might be useful to other project implementers. We have grouped our lessons learned into three categories that also represents how we think about our work: **Build, Do, and Learn.***



Build: Designing Technology

Know your users

A country childhood immunization program spans across the entire health system, resulting in many stakeholders who often have conflicting priorities. To understand their perspectives, we build user profiles to represent the major user groups that are involved in the immunization program. This method helps us design a system that meets everyone's unique needs.

Know how your system is used

Listening to health workers is key to building a system that works for them. We spoke with and observed health workers in their clinics so our system would reflect their existing workflow. Employing this design philosophy, we have reduced the number of clicks it takes for a health worker to move through our system by 75%. Similarly, we engaged in conversation with our end users so we collect data that is most useful to them. The closer the VaxTrac system mirrors existing processes, the more likely people are to use it.

Support your users

We actively monitor system usage, health worker capacity and reporting in every clinic, which provides us with new insights into how health workers use VaxTrac. This knowledge has caused us to rethink our design process. As part of that, we have started to incorporate regular user feedback sessions into our design schedule. Each user feedback session will preface our regular software updates to ensure that each new iteration of our software meets the unique needs of our end users.



Do: Managing Projects

The power of relationships

Garnering support from various levels of a health system is a challenging but critical component to a project's success. We have made a more aggressive effort to lead a steering committee for this project, which will seek to gain buy-in from the Ministry of Health as well as other NGOs and project partners.

Invest in support infrastructure

On-the-ground technical support is crucial for building health workers' confidence in the system. Oftentimes just knowing that someone is there who can fix glitches when they arise increases health workers' faith in the system. We have made huge leaps in expanding our staff capacity this past year, but we still have work left to do around ensuring that health centers using our technology feel adequately supported.

Marketability

People love the novelty of the fingerprinting process. The clinics that do the best are the ones that promote how proud they are to have the technology. The presence of the technology has increased community dialogue around childhood immunizations, which helps to encourage parents to complete their children's vaccinations.

Support local champions

We have found great success in identifying and supporting local champions of the system. These are health workers that promote the use of the system among their peers and provide information training and re-training. We make sure to provide them with the training and support they need.



Learn: Measuring Impact

Measure what you can

Initially, we focused our evaluation on the most intuitive areas of impact, such as health outcomes and reduced vaccine wastage. Yet these are among the hardest indicators to measure. We now focus our efforts on indicators that we can both measure and attribute directly to our work.

Contribute to the conversation

Our work requires that we straddle the line between the fields of technology and public health. As the mHealth field grows, organizations are experimenting with different monitoring and evaluation techniques and sharing their successes and failures with the greater mHealth community. We are continuing to contribute to the conversation with mHealth organizations about the best methodologies for evaluating public health technology projects.

Display data for decision makers

How we display data is as important as the data we collect. We have thus been working with decision makers to understand what data is the most important to them and how they want to see it. We are working towards improving our web-based reporting tool and will continue to get feedback from decision makers to ensure that the data we collect is useful to them.

We always strive to integrate our lessons learned into the design and implementation of VaxTrac. We want our technology to decrease the administrative burden on frontline health so they can spend more time caring for their patients. The number one way to achieve our goal is to listen to their needs and use their feedback to improve our product. We encourage other implementers to incorporate our lessons learned into their own programming.