mHero

mHero is a two-way, **mobile phone-based communication system** that connects **ministries of health** and **health workers**. It uses data from existing local health information systems to deliver messages via locally popular communication channels. It reduces the barriers that can exist between health workers and their support systems, playing a critical role in ensuring effective and efficient responses, particularly in a crisis.

mHero ORIGINS

IntraHealth International and UNICEF created mHero in 2014 to support health-sector communication during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. mHero was credited by USAID as an important contributor to controlling the disease outbreak by delivering fast, informative communication to frontline health workers, and transmitting immediate, precise case reporting from them.

Since the end of the Ebola crisis, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in Liberia has integrated the platform into its health information system infrastructure to meet ongoing communication needs for various health services. Several other countries have also tested or deployed mHero including for **COVID-19 response**.

The technology behind mHero has also evolved since the initial deployment, making mHero more **interoperable** with other communication platforms and any health information system.

mHero's ongoing use and development illustrate that the platform is **flexible, scalable, and sustainable** for governments in low- and middle-income countries.

mHero CAPABILITIES

By using existing systems and platforms, mHero has the potential to reach every health worker in a country, providing them with life-saving information and support in addition to collecting information from them about the conditions in their facilities and communities. This results in both health officials and health workers having the information they need to address health challenges and to serve the health needs of their countries and communities.

mHero can:

- Reach the entire health workforce or targeted groups with important updates, notifications, reminders, encouragement, and more
- Send alerts as part of a disease surveillance system
- Enable frontline health workers to report conditions and issues they are facing in their facilities and/or communities
- Conduct rapid "flash" surveys of health workers
- Produce real-time inventory data
- Send structured messages for refresher training and courses
- Validate and consolidate health worker and services data at the national level
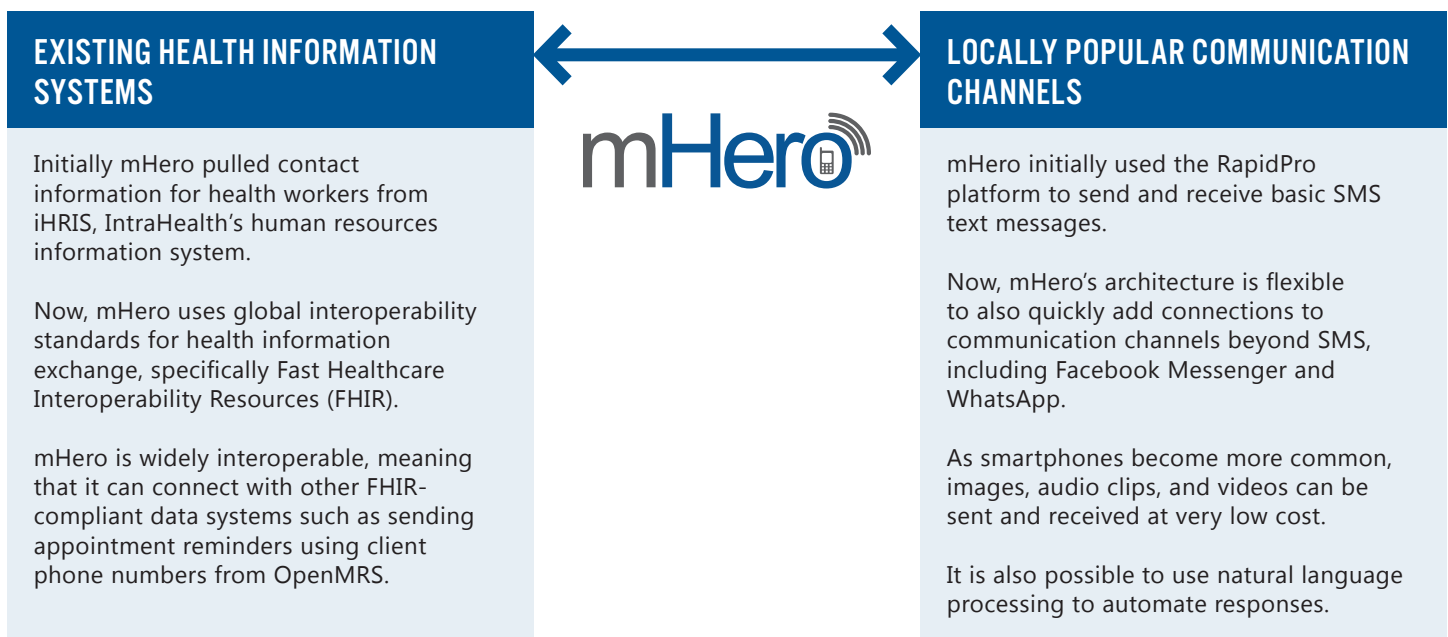- Deliver lab test results

IMPLEMENTING mHero

mHero requires committed country **leadership**, **oversight**, and **governance**. Host governments or other groups managing health worker cadres decide how to best use mHero, while donors and nongovernmental organizations such as USAID, UNICEF, and IntraHealth build country capacity to deploy and manage the platform.

IntraHealth can work with national health ministries, certification and registration bodies, and regional departments of health to create or manage existing contact information for frontline health workers.

We can quickly deploy mHero in any country, through technical and programmatic assistance, empowering local teams, and providing remote support for local digital health professionals.

THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND mHero

mHero is not a new technology—it's an innovative way to connect existing technologies.

EXISTING HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Initially mHero pulled contact information for health workers from iHRIS, IntraHealth's human resources information system.

Now, mHero uses global interoperability standards for health information exchange, specifically Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR).

mHero is widely interoperable, meaning that it can connect with other FHIR-compliant data systems such as sending appointment reminders using client phone numbers from OpenMRS.

LOCALLY POPULAR COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

mHero initially used the RapidPro platform to send and receive basic SMS text messages.

Now, mHero's architecture is flexible to also quickly add connections to communication channels beyond SMS, including Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.

As smartphones become more common, images, audio clips, and videos can be sent and received at very low cost.

It is also possible to use natural language processing to automate responses.

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