DRC’s Digital Health Campus

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Agenda

- Digital health context in DRC
- Creation of DRC’s Digital Health Campus
  - Education & research
  - Virtual outpatient clinic of DRC
- The impact of Covid-19
- New perspectives
Digital health context in DRC

- Creation of the *Agence Nationale de l’Ingénierie Clinique, de l’Information et le de l’Informatique de Santé (ANICiiS)* in December 2018
  - National digital health agency responsible for strategic digital health planning, regulatory activities and coordination of digital health implementation projects
  - Objective: transform organic growth of donor driven initiatives into a coherent bundle of activities aligned with the MoH digital health vision
  - Excellent idea, but no budget, no human or material resources and... no real action plan to start with

- *Plan National de Développement de l’Informatique de la sa Santé (PNDIS)*
  - First plan covered period 2014-2019 and was hardly implemented (no political backup, low general interest)
    - Draft in March 2020
    - Validated in August 2020
    - Strong political backup
Creation of DRC’s Digital Health Campus

- PNDIS II, general objective 3, strategic axis 5: capacity building and research in digital health
  - Creation of the Digital Health Campus as an inter-university program of the Public Health Schools of Kinshasa (UNIKIN), Lubumbashi (UNILU) and Bukavu (UCB)
    - Extending ongoing collaboration within RIPSEC project with ITM
  - Creation and coordination of academic digital health training & research programs in DRC
    - Focused on operational needs of the country
    - Adapated to specific Central African health care context
  - 2 components
    - Centre d’Excellence de Formation et Recherche en Informatique de la Santé (CERFIS)
    - Polyclinique Virtuelle de la RDC
Centre d’Excellence de Formation et Recherche en Informatique de la Santé (CERFIS)

- **Education & training**
  - Master in Public Health with specialization in Digital Health, shared by the 3 Schools of Public Health (2021-2022)
  - Post-graduate Certificates in Applied Health Informatics for target groups (2020)
  - Continued Professional Development programs in Digital Health (2020)
- **4 Research units** targeting the needs of DRC’s low resource health care setting
  - Digital Health Sociology (social determinants of success and failure in digital health) *
  - Clinical decision support at the point of care
  - Artificial intelligence and big data for health
  - Biomedical engineering for development *

* MOU with VUB signed in August 2020
Polyclinique virtuelle de la RDC

- Digital health tools **supporting the care process**
  - Tele-consultation
  - Tele-expertise
  - Tele-surveillance
- **Run by the university teaching hospitals** of the participating universities
  - Additional resources from private sector and Congolese diaspora
  - Bringing expertise concentrated in urban areas to rural settings
  - Providing *on the job* continued professional development
The impact of Covid-19

- Realizing the importance of digital solutions to cope with a context of reduced mobility, confinement, contamination risks and increased communication needs
  - Important political and societal backup for digital health
    - accelerated PNDIS validation
    - increased academic managerial interest: VUB MOU sequentially signed by 3 rectors in 8 days
    - Compulsive Covid 19 focused action has exposed the lack of coordination and led to higher awareness of the importance of planning and good governance
  - Online collaboration has become a common good
    - Development initiated by the CNS of a harmonized pan African master in public health with specialization in digital health with 14 universities in Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, the Comoros and Madagascar (virtual Colloquium on 26 August 2020)
Pan African (francophone) collaboration in the field of digital health education and research

Conceived and setup without any donor intervention, starting from needs, competences and societal objectives

Covid 19 has triggered a new reflection on the need of a national strategic plan for biomedical research in DRC and an institute that can coordinate the activities to put such plan into action

Research resources are scattered over the country, many times uncoordinated and donor driven (haven’t we heard that before?)

Need for a global epidemiological surveillance solution for the country (and not 20 different disease-specific ones)

Need for local research capacity on national health data

Will we see the birth of a PNDRB and a CDC DRC or INRB+ in 2021? The Campus Numérique de la Santé could well become the digital health component of it.
FINALLY!