I-DAIR and partners research optimal approaches to building citizen science intelligence for efficient pandemic preparedness and response

Following their call for feasible, sustainable, and contextualized citizen science, the International Digital Health and AI Research Collaborative (I-DAIR) and its partners are now set to evaluate the awareness and readiness of local communities toward digitally-enabled participatory approaches, specifically within the context of pandemic preparedness and response.

Conducted jointly with regional civil society representatives from I-DAIR's Scientific Working Group (SWG), this project is built within the framework of I-DAIR's Global Pandemic Surveillance and Response Scheme: a global, science-based, data-driven, neutral, and trusted collective digital capacity which leverages citizen science to improve the quality of local and national responses throughout the continuum of pandemic phases.

To determine the fundamental and context-specific conditions necessary for community engagement, needs assessments are undertaken simultaneously in 9 countries (Bangladesh, Cameroon, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, the Philippines, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) by local implementation partners from the Rural Development Academy (RDA), Effective Basic Services (eBASE), Dr. Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College (Dr. RPGMC), International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the Indonesian Climate Institute, WACI Health, Amref, the RD Foundation, Wireless Access for Health (WAH), Makerere University Centre for Health and Population Research (MUCHAP), Zimbabwe's National Network of PLHIV+ (ZNNP+), and ZiCHIRE, respectively.

Starting this month, this first phase will identify the systemic barriers and facilitators for community buy-in toward citizen science and determine contextualized best practices for empowering communities to improve health literacy, raise awareness of public health issues, and communicate health information.

According to Harjyot Khosa, Senior Technical Advisor at the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), specialist in community engagement, member of I-DAIR's Scientific Working group, and Principal Investigator of the assessment: "Community intelligence, through citizen science, is the fundamental component to plan for pandemic preparedness and response. With our bottom-up approach, we are reaching out to indigenous and marginalized communities. Our local solutions, for local problems, are enabling us to understand a community-friendly digital response to current and future pandemics."

Up to 2800 community members, including marginalized populations, last-mile health workers, and people in rural and hard-to-reach geographies, will participate in the initial surveys and focus group discussions. For this purpose, I-DAIR has produced study materials in local languages, relevant to each context (Swahili, Lusoga, French, Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Bangla, Nepali, Ndebele, and Shona), with the first conclusions expected for the end of the year.

For more information about this project, you can contact us at contact@i-dair.org.

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I-DAIR has been designed to better support the digital transformation of health systems and provide a framework for an end-to-end approach to the global research ecosystem for digital health and AI for health. This work ranges from creating a global research map of digital health and AI and developing a governance model for AI and data, to benchmarking digital health solutions (e.g. electronic Patient Reported Outcome Monitoring). For more information about I-DAIR, kindly visit our website and consider following our progress on Twitter and LinkedIn.

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