

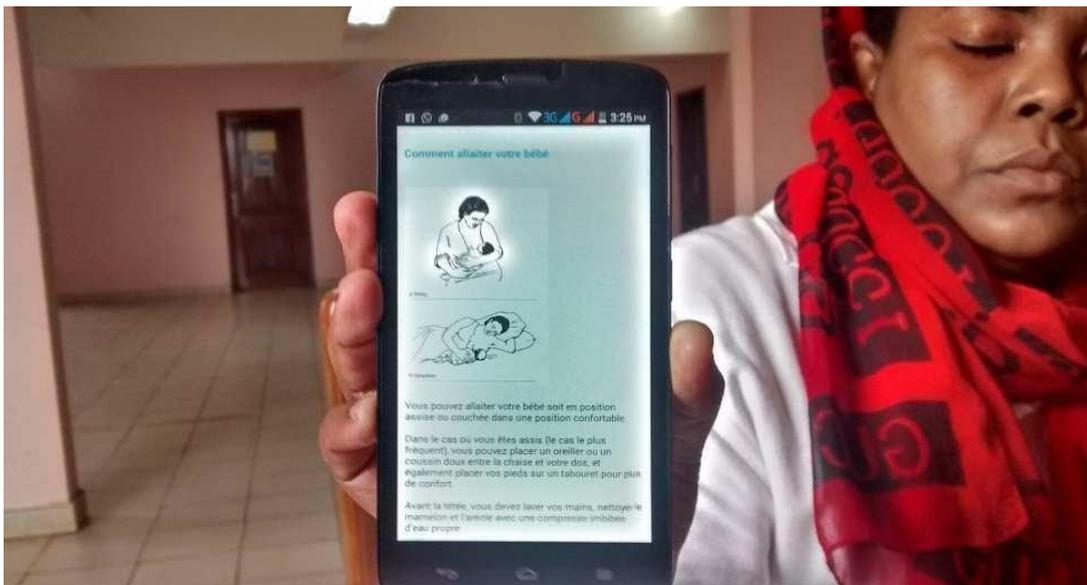
Report for the Global South eHealth Observatory of the



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Gifted Mom

Saving lives through digital technology (Cameroon)



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We travelled to Cameroon to meet Alain Nteff, the founder of social startup Gifted Mom. It all started in 2012 when Alain Nteff, then barely 20, went to visit a friend doing an internship at a rural maternity hospital. Alain realised that although many babies were born prematurely, incubators were functioning poorly, mainly due to power cuts, and that *“the only babies saved were those whose mothers and families had sufficient financial resources to pay for the necessary care.”* Alain continues: *“In two weeks, an average of 17 newborns died. It was my first encounter with this problem, I was shocked, and I decided to act.”*

The main problem identified by Alain at that time was that pregnant women did not go to the maternity hospital. *“The problem is that consultation is a preventive phase neglected by mums.”* In this region, it is not so much a problem of proximity to hospitals (i.e. a transport problem), but essentially a lack of information on the part of mothers.



Alain and his friend then discovered that 84% of Cameroonians had a mobile phone and concluded that the majority of mums therefore had access to one. The two friends had the idea to use mobile phones to send health information to mums: it would be enough to note a pregnant woman’s phone number during her first visit to the clinic, and then be able to monitor her throughout her pregnancy. This led to the idea of Gifted Mom, a hotline dedicated to fighting child mortality.



Economic model and operation

Gifted Mom is a smartphone and feature phone app that sends text messages to pregnant women in urban and rural areas of Cameroon to remind them of the dates of their prenatal hospital appointments. Mums can also ask questions by sending a free text message to 8566. Within three hours, one of the team's doctors will answer questions about baby's temperature, bleeding, advice on baby nutrition, etc. An emergency system is even planned, for cases of haemorrhage for example, in coordination with the nearest health centres.

Thanks to this service, the number of deaths related to childbirth has decreased considerably in the areas where the project is operational, and *"the partner health centres have seen their prenatal consultation rate increase by 35% in two years."* (Alain Nteff)

Today, Gifted Mom has just over 8,000 users, with monthly growth of 2 to 7%, *"but this could speed up. We expect to grow by 20 to 25% per month,"* explains Alain, who often talks about the urgency to act for his country: *"This problem of infant and maternal mortality must be solved... It's an emergency! Mums die in silence in this country. The government, but also us social entrepreneurs, must ask what can be done to improve the health of Cameroonian women and their newborns."*

For the moment, as the service is free, Gifted Mom does not yet have a well-established economic model: the project survives on awards won in Africa (New York Africa Forum, Anzisha Prize, Startupper of the Year by Total etc.), totalling several tens of thousands of euros that have allowed it to *"do the best it can with the means at its disposal,"* without having to take out bank loans. Gifted Mom also raised funds - about \$120,000 - to expand into neighbouring Nigeria.

Current needs and expansion prospects

“We won the NYFA African Start-Up Award. That’s how we started. Awards really allowed us to recruit, buy equipment, rent premises, etc.” Alain Nteff.

“We want to create value, but we must also be viable. Before it starts to pay, we want to cover our expenses,” Alain Nteff.

Although it is a young social enterprise that is not entirely profit-oriented, Gifted Mom is an innovative startup, and aims for its capacity development to very quickly extend to the whole of Cameroon, then beyond its national borders: *“We are aiming for 50,000 users in 2016 and are working towards this goal with the United Nations, and several NGOs. We want to reach 20,000 people in Northern Cameroon, the situation is very serious there and the presence of Boko Haram adds to the people’s suffering.”* Gifted Mom wishes to form partnerships with several large Cameroonian, African and international companies as part of their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) policy. In 2018, Gifted Mom wishes to help no less than five million users in Cameroon and Nigeria with its app.

