THERE IS NO APP FOR THIS!

Regulating the Migration of Health Data in Sub-Saharan Africa

PROJECT NEWSLETTER

October 2023

Summer School and Writing Retreat, Coventry, United Kingdom

On 4-8 September 2023, Principle Investigator Professor Sharifah Sekalala (University of Warwick) brought together members of the project team for an enriching week-long Summer School focused on digital health apps and regulations. The event was hosted by the School of Law, University of Warwick, and welcomed members from the Open Institute, CEHURD, CIPESA, Ministry of Health in Uganda, as well as academics from the University of Nairobi, University of Warwick, and University of the Witwatersrand.

The Summer School provided a platform to delve and ponder critical questions such as how to strike a balance between the convenience and functionality of health tracking apps and digital technologies while safeguarding the right to privacy and protecting human rights.

Moreover, the program aimed to enhance writing skills across various mediums for academics and civil society representatives. A dedicated session on mobile journalism and storytelling was also held to provide valuable insights and techniques to incorporate into their work, ultimately expanding their reach and influence.

Mr. Solomon Muhumuza, Ministry of Health (Uganda) who was a participant of the event said:

> *"I was particularly impressed by the diverse range of participants. It provided me with a valuable opportunity to identify civil society organizations in Uganda with whom I can collaborate. The networking opportunities between government and CSOs was the highlight for me."*

Professor Sharifah Sekalala, Principal Investigator for There is No App For This! project said:

> *"We were delighted to welcome a wide range of stakeholders to Warwick to discuss digital health. This kind of event is at the heart of the socio legal approach of law that WLS is famous for as it encourages multiple stakeholders to collectively find solutions to regulatory problems."*

In summary, the Summer School served as a platform to shed light on regulatory gaps within the health sector, particularly when merged with digital technology. It facilitated meaningful discussions and collaboration among the project team, consisting of app developers, academics, and civil society representatives, to collectively address these critical issues.

Workshop on Digital Health: Regulatory and Policy Perspectives

On 4 September 2023, 30 participants from Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, India, Singapore, the Netherlands, Columbia, and the United Kingdom gathered for a series of engaging discussions, delving deep into the multifaceted challenges presented by the digital health landscape globally. The themes explored at the session included: legal and regulatory preparedness surrounding digital health applications in responding to public health threats; opportunities and challenges of collecting and handling personal health data; digital health and AI in Sub-Saharan Africa, India, Singapore, Latin America and the EU; the role of organisations in transforming the health data governance landscape, bioethics, and data colonialism. The papers presented at the workshop were in response to a call for papers for a special issue on Regulatory and Policy Perspectives and Digital Health which will be edited by Professor Sharifah Sekalala and Mr. Tatenda Chatikobo. The workshop video is available here.

Key Outputs

- In July 2023, the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), our civil society partner in Uganda, published a brief entitled 'Health Data Regulation: Lessons from Covid-19 Surveillance in Kenya and Uganda'. This brief looks back at how personal data related to COVID-19 was collected and handled, and what lessons that experience offers for the future of health data regulation and governance. In particular, the brief reviews the experiences of Kenya and Uganda.

- CIPESA also published a commentary blog titled 'How technology is impacting health data governance in Africa. The Case of Uganda'. The blog highlights the efforts, challenges, and the need for regulatory standards and data protection practices in the context of the COVID-19 and other health crises.

- On July 12-13, 2023, as part of the broader aims of the project, CIPESA conducted a workshop on 'Advancing Data Justice in Africa' at the Data Fest Africa 2023 in Kenya. The workshop featured guest speakers and stakeholders from Tanzania, Cameroon, Senegal, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa.

- Open Institute, our civil society partner in Kenya, has published their first podcast which discusses the journey of the project's six app designers in developing health applications, from ideation to launch. They share their personal experiences, insights, challenges, and lessons learned along the way.

Announcements

- Professor Pamela Andanda welcomed her research assistant for the project, Mr. Takudzwa Mutomba, at the University of Witwatersrand.

- Three new members have joined Professor Sharifah Sekalala at the University of Warwick: two postdoctoral research fellows—Dr. Lyla Latif and Mr. Tatenda Chatikobo—and a research assistant, Ms. Yureshya Perera.

- We bid a fond farewell to Ms. Belinda Rawson, who has departed from her role as a Research Assistant to embark on an exciting journey pursuing her PhD at the School of Law, University of Warwick. Although she has moved on to further her academic pursuits, we are thrilled to share that Belinda will continue contributing to our project, particularly focusing on package 5. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Belinda for her invaluable contributions over the past several years and the pivotal role she played in our collective achievements. Wishing her the very best in all her future endeavours!

Next Steps

In this quarter, there will be a number of blog posts and podcasts produced under this project. Follow our work via Twitter and web to keep yourself updated.

The important and exciting work being undertaken by project members across all work packages will continue.