

# Telehealth app bridges gap in healthcare in Africa

A new telehealth app from Remote Doctors 4 Africa will not only bring digital healthcare to rural communities in Africa but has the additional benefit of allowing doctors to capture critical data at a village clinic level, providing stakeholders with invaluable insight into the prioritisation of much-needed resources.



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While hospitals might have networks and connectivity in place, the rural village clinics do not have this. They often rely on dongles to connect to the internet.

“Most doctors in rural village clinics and communities do everything on a piece of paper which gets filed somewhere,” says Ernest Mhlongo, CEO of Remote Doctors 4 Africa, a start-up focused on the digital healthcare ecosystem.

“If a patient visits another physician, there is no medical history to fall back on.

“By pushing for all this information to be stored in the cloud, we are making sophisticated analytics possible that can help healthcare providers and governments identify where best to allocate resources,” he explains.

For Remote Doctors 4 Africa, it is about connecting the unconnected and using technology to bridge the gap in healthcare.

## Technology for Africa by Africa

“We are using technology built in Africa for Africans,” says Mhlongo.

“We understand the challenges of infrastructure and healthcare on the continent, and we have developed a platform that is language-agnostic, biometrics enabled, to address the need to deliver hospital-grade healthcare to rural communities,” he adds

The app can be used on all mobile devices whether a smartphone or a more basic feature phone, like a standard Nokia for example.

## **Telehealth not telemedicine**

“Even though telemedicine (the remote diagnosis and treatment of patients through technology) has been getting significant attention on the continent, not much is said about telehealth,” says Mhlongo.

This is where hospital-grade diagnostic equipment is brought closer to the patient.

“Effectively, this sees a nurse operating the equipment at the location and a doctor doing the consultation remotely, enabled through various technology platforms.

“There are companies that specialise in either of these approaches, but we provide a value proposition that integrates both with local knowledge and skills,” explains Mhlongo.

## **Access to remote areas**

Covid-19, and its subsequential onslaught to communities across the continent, highlighted the dire situation, not only in South Africa but across Africa, where rural communities lack access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

It is these forgotten citizens that Remote Doctors 4 Africa want to assist through a range of telemedicine, telehealth, and connectivity solutions.

Through the Remote Doctors 4 Africa app (RD4A), citizens in the remote corners of South Africa, Botswana, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe, will have access to digital telehealth services, and healthcare professionals will have access to critical data.

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