

COMPREHENSIVE CARE FOR CHRONIC DISEASES: DIGITAL HEALTH AND EQUITY IN CARE NETWORKS / Brazil

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Implementation Period: 2023

Identified Problem

There are challenges in the clinical management of chronic conditions due to the shortage of specialist professionals. As a result, Indigenous and Quilombola patients must be transferred to large urban centers, leading to prolonged waiting times and extended absences from their territories. This situation disrupts the daily lives of families, particularly among Indigenous populations, due to cultural factors.

Implemented Solutions

The adoption of Telehealth initiatives results from the digital transformation within the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS), through the SUS Digital Program. These initiatives expand access to quality services, ensure faster diagnoses, and focus particularly on traditional populations, such as Indigenous and Quilombola communities, as well as health professionals and managers. This approach eliminates the need for extensive travel and long waiting periods. Consequently, it reduces healthcare gaps and waiting times, reflecting a commitment to promoting equity, innovation, and continuity of care.

Results

The expansion of Telehealth services integrated into the SUS Digital Program for Indigenous and Quilombola communities leverages innovative technologies to overcome geographical barriers. The National Teliagnosis Offering, provided by the Brazilian Telehealth Network, includes services such as electrocardiograms, retinography, and dermatology consultations. These services optimize care, increase access to specialists—especially in remote areas—enable early diagnosis, prevent serious complications, and allow for rapid, less invasive interventions, thereby reducing costs.

Key Stakeholders

•Ministry of Health; Secretariat for Digital Health and Information (SEIDIGI/MS); Secretariat for Indigenous Health (SESAI/MS); The 34 Special Indigenous Sanitary Districts (DSEI); Quilombola communities; Telehealth Centers; State Health Secretariats; Municipal Health Secretariats.

•**Role of PAHO/WHO:** PAHO/WHO plays an essential role in advancing digital health by emphasizing the potential benefits of digital technologies in healthcare across the Americas. PAHO advocates for equitable access to digital health services.

Beneficiaries

Indigenous and Quilombola communities..

Theme: Innovation in Digital Health

A significant portion of the Indigenous population lives in the Legal Amazon, which concentrates 51.25% of the country's Indigenous people (867,900 individuals). The Northern region hosts 44.48% (753,357 people), followed by the Northeast, with 31.22% (528,800 people). The states with the largest Indigenous populations are Amazonas (490,900) and Bahia (229,100), together accounting for 42.51% of Brazil's total Indigenous population. Cities such as Manaus (AM), São Gabriel da Cachoeira (AM), and Tabatinga (AM) have the highest numbers of Indigenous inhabitants.

Figura 6 Aldeia Balão - São Gabriel da Cachoeira-AM



Images: The expansion of Telehealth services to Indigenous communities utilizes innovative technologies to overcome geographical barriers, providing specialized care, early diagnosis, and continuous follow-up, even in the most remote areas.

Challenges and Strategies

The primary challenge is connectivity. To address this gap, in 2023, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva inaugurated "Infovia 1" as part of the Northern Connected Program. This infrastructure benefits over three million people by providing high-speed broadband internet to 11 municipalities from Santarém (PA) to Manaus (AM). These regions are typically accessed by boats—requiring up to 15 days of travel—or by expensive flights. The Ministry of Health, through SEIDIGI, ensured the provision of Telehealth services in these areas following the arrival of high-speed connectivity.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The strengthening of the National Health Data Network (RNDS) as the national interoperability platform will be prioritized. Efforts will focus on improving access and quality of services through digital solutions, with an emphasis on connectivity and the expansion of the Brazilian Telehealth Network, promoting inclusive and accessible digital health.