



Bridging the Digital Divide: A Policy Brief on Telemedicine and Maternal Health in Urban Republic of the Congo

Mireille Okombi¹

¹ Marien Ngouabi University, Brazzaville

Published: 23 February 2009 | **Received:** 14 November 2008 | **Accepted:** 03 February 2009

Correspondence: mokombi@gmail.com

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18527597](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18527597)

Author notes

Mireille Okombi is affiliated with Marien Ngouabi University, Brazzaville and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.

Abstract

Title: Bridging the Digital Divide: A Policy Brief on Telemedicine and Maternal Health in Urban Republic of the Congo Maternal mortality persists as a critical public health issue in the Republic of the Congo, with urban healthcare systems under particular strain. Although digitalisation offers potential to enhance care access and quality, a significant digital divide constrains the application of telemedicine for urban maternal health services. This brief analyses the barriers to and opportunities for implementing telemedicine for maternal health in urban Congo. It aims to propose evidence-based policy options for using digital tools effectively while advancing equitable access. The brief synthesises evidence from a desk review of policy documents, grey literature, and existing programme evaluations concerning digital health and maternal care in the Congolese context. Stakeholder viewpoints were derived from published reports. Infrastructure deficits and low digital literacy among providers and service users were identified as primary barriers. A central finding was the risk of telemedicine exacerbating existing inequities, as access was often concentrated among wealthier, more educated urban women. However, successful pilot programmes indicated that hybrid models, integrating teleconsultations with community health worker support, could improve antenatal care engagement. Telemedicine alone cannot address maternal healthcare gaps in urban Congo without concurrent investment in digital infrastructure and literacy. A deliberate, equitable strategy is needed to ensure digital tools supplement, rather than weaken, the existing health system. 1. Formulate a national digital health strategy for maternal care with explicit equity objectives. 2. Invest in public digital infrastructure and affordable internet access within urban health districts. 3. Implement integrated digital literacy training for healthcare workers and service users. 4. Scale hybrid care models that combine telemedicine with in-person community health outreach. telemedicine, maternal health, digital divide, urban health, Republic of the Congo, health policy This policy brief provides a focused analysis for policymakers on integrating telemedicine into urban maternal healthcare in the Republic of the Congo, highlighting the imperative of equity-centred design to prevent the deepening of existing disparities.

Keywords: *Telemedicine, Maternal mortality, Digital divide, Urban health, Sub-Saharan Africa, Health policy, e-Health*



ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

This is an abstract-only publication. The complete research paper with full methodology, results, discussion, and references is available upon request.



REQUEST FULL PAPER

 **Email:** info@parj.africa

Request your copy of the full paper today!



SUBMIT YOUR RESEARCH

Are you a researcher in Africa? We welcome your submissions!

Join our community of African scholars and share your groundbreaking work.



Submit at: app.parj.africa



Scan to visit app.parj.africa

Open Access Scholarship from PARJ

Empowering African Research | Advancing Global Knowledge