

CommCare: Mobile Data Collection and Reporting Platform

In low-resource settings across the world, frontline workers (FLWs) play a critical role in linking their communities to the formal-services. Mobile tools have increasingly been designed and implemented for frontline programs to address the resource gaps and challenges they face in delivering essential services. Given the vast potential for mobile technologies to support frontline programs, an increasing amount of funding and research has gone toward implementing mobile technology in low-resource settings, in an effort to improve frontline programs and client health outcomes.

CommCare (www.commcarehq.org) is a customizable, open source mobile platform that enables nonprogrammers to build mobile applications for data collection, counseling, behavior change, and a variety of other functions. To date, hundreds of organizations have used CommCare to build mobile applications that are designed to support FLWs across a variety of sectors in low-resource settings. FLWs use CommCare to track and support their clients with registration forms, checklists, SMS reminders, and multimedia—all on simple Java enabled phones or Android smart phones and tablets. Currently, CommCare users submit over 1 million forms per month from 50+ countries around the world.

CommCare was developed to reduce gaps that frontline programs face in delivering services to populations in low-resource settings. Some governments have continued to use the tool after the CRS program implementation has finished.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) uses CommCare for case management and the delivery and administration of surveys to collect, report and share project information. Program staff can easily track and store activities of field extension workers and beneficiary records including GPS coordinates, signatures, photos and information on program indicators.

CommCare is a mobile application and data collection platform. It is often integrated with other platforms such as [ArcGIS](#) and [Power BI](#) (for analyses of geographic data and advanced visualizations).

CommCare is CRS' officially recommended and supported platform for monitoring and evaluation of projects, case management and mobile support for field workers.

A convenient solution, information can be collected offline and synced to a secure online database, allowing for centralized, transparent and efficient data collection, proven to be time and cost effective across CRS programs in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

WHAT IS IT?

CommCare is a mobile app to collect, report, and store data online or offline. CommCare tracks field worker activity and beneficiaries' records complete with photos, signatures, GPS coordinates and more. Projects can create unique mobile applications powered by CommCare that cater to their technological capacity or program requirements. The core purpose for CommCare is case management and the delivery and administration of surveys. Information collected is then stored in a secure online database to ensure a transparent organization.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

CommCare has affordable mobile data collection pricing plans to fit any budget. To view a complete list of pricing plans (including *Paying Monthly* rates), please visit: [COMMCARE PRICING](#). The application itself does not have a cost; however, support packages do have a cost.

WHEN DO YOU USE IT?

CommCare should be used:

- When managing cases, with or without barcoding system, over a long period of time;
- For one-off or frequent surveys;
- To automate digital data collection for projects with multiple sectors with large data sets;
- To provide tailored recommendations offline in the field (CommCare can provide back-end algorithm processing).

WHO SHOULD USE IT?

CommCare is tailored to field managers and requires less IT experience than other similar applications. The application does not cost to use, but does cost for support – making the application more accessible.

HOW DO YOU USE IT?

CommCare is CRS' officially recommended and supported platform used for monitoring and evaluation of projects, mobile support for field workers, sharing information through SMS, and storing data.

SOME EXAMPLES OF COMMCARE AT CRS:

- The **KABOS Project** in Haiti uses CommCare to send SMS messages containing new information and job aids to farmers every week. The project also uses it to collect data and send pictures/GPS locations to field workers.
- In India, CommCare aids community health workers of the [ReMiND Project](#) in sharing prenatal and postnatal care information to local communities. CommCare also tracks pregnancies and postnatal periods to remind rural women of treatments and follow up appointments.
- The **Uttarakhand Flood Response Project** in India used CommCare to monitor post-distribution of emergency aid.
- 4Children used CommCare to track the delivery of health and social services to young girls in Haiti.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

Here are some concepts and terms you'll become familiar with as you use CommCare. Most of the terms correspond to functionality you'll use either on the server side (CommCareHQ) or the client side (CommCare mobile):

- **Project Space:** A secure web portal into your CommCare project. It contains all form submissions from your CommCare applications, as well as tools that help you create, manage, and deploy your applications and workers.
- **Forms & the Form Builder:** CommCare Forms are XML-based files that define forms. You can use Form Builder to create individual forms in your application. It was designed specifically for CommCare but creates forms that comply with the XForm standard. Advanced users can write their own from scratch, or use other tools like FormHub, and upload them to CommCareHQ.
- **Java:** CommCare for standard feature phones – generally 'Nokia' brand phones.
- **Android:** CommCare for Android smartphones. Mostly the same as CommCare for Java Phones but takes advantage of some of the additional functionality of Android phones.

Please note that this is in **NO WAY** an exhaustive list of CommCare terms and definitions, for a complete list please visit: [CommCare Term Glossary](#)

For more information, please visit the [CommCare Help Site](#).

To get training on CommCare, please visit the [Dimagi Academy](#).

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

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