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BUILDING AN ECOSYSTEM TO PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE EHEALTH TECHNICAL CAPABILITY FOR THE PHILIPPINES

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Background The recent years has shown an increase in global health innovations in health related software built and developed in donor countries for application in Low or Middle Income Countries. This is evidenced by the growing number of events, literature, and research on eHealth in developed countries for developing countries (Lewis *et al.* 2012) The challenges in applying the eHealth innovations created in donor countries to developing countries are many. They are similar in nature to North-South Collaborative Industrial Research and Development. (Wolfe and Inbal 2012) The challenges will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this paper.

Objectives The purpose of this paper is to show how the author addressed the various challenges in facilitating the transfer of technology from the donor country to the Philippines, and how the beginnings of an eco-system were formed that could provide the base of technical manpower to help push forward the national eHealth plan of the Philippine government.

Methods This paper will use as its framework, the major challenges that impede the development of North-South Collaborative Industrial Research and Development (CIRD) (Wolfe and Inbal 2012). The major challenges that were identified are the following: (1) Lack of familiarity with needs and opportunities, (2) Difficulty finding appropriate partners, (3) Issues of trust, (4) Communication and coordination challenges and (5) Financing-related issues.

Result A. North-South collaboration between the Sana project at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology [MIT] and Asia Pacific College[APC] in the Philippines. The issues stated in the previous section were addressed in the following ways: (1) Lack of familiarity with needs and opportunities: MIT sent a student intern to the Philippines in 2009 to do a study of the delivery of eHealth and Telemedicine services to the Philippines from a sustainability perspective (Kuan 2009) from this study, the needs and opportunities were identified on how to apply eHealth technology to the local Philippine setting. (2) Difficulty finding appropriate partners: The North-South partnership was formed when the MIT Team

presented their work at a Philippine MIT alumni meeting in 2009. From there, the MIT Team was able to get connected with the author, who was, and is still currently a professor at Asia Pacific College, a local college committed to bridging the academe and industry in the Philippines. (APC 2014)

Conclusion The author proposes that the organizational work that was started in 2009, and is already in place be strengthened through support and funding from both local and international organizations dedicated to making eHealth become a reality in developing countries like the Philippines. It will be a quicker path to expand the existing work that has already been accomplished rather than trying to establish a new network and path to collaboration across the different local and international organizations.