

Data driven decision making in Kenya's healthcare Sector

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Various health sector reviews done over the last decade highlighted stagnating or downward trends in health indices in the country, especially in maternal, newborn and child health. Among other factors, a health information system (HIS) that was weak and unable to provide the public health information necessary to inform timely health interventions was identified as one of the contributors to some of the declining health indices.

Recognizing this critical role played by a functional HIS, in 2010 Kenya's HIS Division spearheaded an overhaul of the existing system to replace it with the web-based District Health Information Software (DHIS2). DHIS2 is designed to facilitate generation, analysis and dissemination of quality health information. The role of quality data in enabling informed healthcare decision making cannot be over-emphasized.

For instance, good quality routine HIS data delivered in a complete and timely manner can be used in surveillance of diseases of public health importance, to prevent or control outbreaks, as well to strategize on adequacy of service delivery under the various disease programs. Healthcare practitioners and other professionals can also use this data for training and research, and subsequently in production of research to policy briefs to inform national health policies and programs. Yet evidence shows very low levels of data demand and use by healthcare practitioners in Kenya.

This study presents a review of several cases which elaborate on how good quality data has been utilized to drive decisions leading to improved healthcare programs and services in other countries. In particular the study points out the role that DHIS2 has played as an enabling tool for acquisition of this quality data.

In conclusion it challenges the Kenya health professionals to take advantage of the improved national HIS to undertake evidence-based research to inform programmatic decision making and health policies in the country.

Key Words:

Data Quality; Healthcare Data Demand and Use; DHIS2