



CHISU Results in Action

Fostering Cross-Country Learning to Strengthen Health Information Systems in Saint Lucia

BACKGROUND

Health information systems (HIS) in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean (ESC) region are at different levels of development. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, each country in the region has been working on finding HIS solutions that fit their needs and fill gaps highlighted by the pandemic. In Saint Lucia, COVID-19 vaccination data is collected outside of and unlinked to COVID-19 case reporting in the Saint Lucia Health Information System (SLUHIS). The Ministry of Health, Wellness and Elderly Affairs (MOH) embarked on a renewed effort to strengthen and expand its use of technology to improve management of COVID-19 data. Key challenges identified included:

1. The broad use of paper records at medical facilities, leading to slow processing of data and reduced data quality
2. The perception among staff that data analysis using paper records is more accurate than the data in the HIS
3. The use of multiple tools for collecting and storing COVID-19 data, leading to multiple data sources and owners

To counter these issues, the MOH decided to develop a COVID-19 data repository to centralize the storage and display of data related to the COVID-19 pandemic and future outbreaks. The goal of the platform is to provide a comprehensive and easily accessible

Country Health Information Systems and Data Use (CHISU) is USAID's flagship data and information system program to strengthen host country capacity and leadership to manage and use health information systems to improve evidence-based decision-making. www.chisuprogram.org

source of information, such as real-time data on cases, deaths, recoveries, testing, and vaccination efforts, which would be accessible to the MOH, other government officials, and international bodies who need access to these data.

DHIS2 (District Health Information Software, Version 2) is a free and open-source software for data entry, analysis, visualization, and sharing that requires training to implement and operate. Implementing DHIS2 requires expertise in the platform—and as countries search for HIS solutions that can be implemented quickly, the time needed to learn how to use DHIS2 can be a barrier. Through the Country Health Information Systems and Data Use (CHISU) program, USAID is supporting governments in the ESC region, including the Government of Saint Lucia, with their COVID-19 response by strengthening their existing national HIS. In Saint Lucia, CHISU is improving MOH knowledge and skills for using and managing electronic health information systems and DHIS2 in particular. The global network of DHIS2 users generates new modules for additional functionalities and facilitates adaptation of solutions from other users' experiences.

STEPS TAKEN

CHISU's approach to HIS strengthening in ESC includes support to consultants with expertise in health management information systems (HMIS) and supply chains, who are embedded in Ministries of Health in the region for a period of 12 months. These consultants, while conducting their daily duties to support the strengthening of COVID-19 data systems in their countries, also meet on a monthly basis with facilitation from CHISU to share challenges and lessons learned and to identify opportunities for cross-country learning. Through these exchanges, the Saint Lucia consultant was able to draw upon the learning and experience of the Suriname consultant. Suriname is one of the countries in the region that has been successful in using DHIS2 for COVID-19 vaccine administration management.

CHISU also connected with the University of Oslo and the Pan American Health Organization's DHIS2 teams to discuss opportunities for technical support toward implementation in Saint Lucia.

RESULTS + NEXT STEPS

With CHISU support, Saint Lucia will be able to deploy DHIS2, with a specific focus on modules for COVID-19 management including Tracker Capture (for port of entry screening), Data Visualizer (for tailored graphs and charts), Immunization Analysis (a

World Health Organization package for analysis of immunization data), and a DHIS2/Go.Data interoperability module for communication between DHIS2 and Go.Data.

The COVID-19 reports generated by DHIS2 will support national policy and operational decision making within Saint Lucia's MOH, and also ensure data quality issues are detected early due to standards that have been built into the current systems. The cross-country learning in the ESC region reinforces use of standards and uniformity in reporting without any one country needing to reinvent the wheel.



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