



CHISU Results in Action

Health Information System Assessment Tool Implementation in Two Countries

Similarities and differences in Niger and Madagascar

BACKGROUND

Maintaining health system performance requires continuous efforts and adaptations that take into account the technological evolution, knowledge, and capacities of various stakeholders. This often involves planning phases that are preceded by evaluation—and countries typically conduct an evaluation of their previous HIS strategic plan. There are different tools that can assess the state of the health information system (HIS). One such tool is the Health Metric Network (HMN) tool, which requires a lengthy implementation period. Newer HIS assessment tools include the Stages of Continuous Improvement (SOCI) toolkit, which assesses the current level of HIS maturity, and the PRISM tool, a framework for strengthening routine HIS (RHIS).

CHALLENGE

The HIS strategic plans in both Madagascar and Niger were due to expire at the end of 2022. With the support of the Country Health Information Systems and Data Use (CHISU) program, the HIS directorates in both countries planned to conduct an assessment of their HIS with the SOCI tool prior to the planning phase of their new strategic plans. Assessments using the SOCI tool allow stakeholders to identify weaknesses in the HIS and to inform and support the strategic plan development process. The process for

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

conducting the assessment with the SOCI tool is well codified in a user guide.¹ The challenges of SOCI assessments include consensus building, prioritization, and the timely availability of results for the planning process.

STEPS TAKEN

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

By analyzing the experiences from Niger and Madagascar during their recent HIS evaluations using the SOCI tool, CHISU has identified similarities as well as some differences. These are outlined in the table below.

Steps of SOCI implementation	Niger	Madagascar
Assessment preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information and presentation of the SOCI tool meeting to the HIS Directorate to obtain their approval and engagement 2. Meeting with all HIS stakeholders 3. Creation and training of the evaluation team 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information and presentation of the SOCI tool meeting to the HIS Directorate to obtain their approval and engagement 2. Meeting with stakeholders
SOCI scoping and approach to evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on Routine Health Information System 2. Approach 3 (hybrid). The evaluation was led by an external facilitator (CHISU) who collaborated with HIS Directorate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on Routine Health Information System 2. Approach 3 (hybrid). The evaluation was led by an external facilitator (CHISU) who collaborated with HIS Directorate
Documents review	Designation of a team from the HIS Directorate for the collection supervised by a CHISU resource person who was in charge of the collection	Assignment of a person from the HIS Directorate to collect with a referral from a CHISU resource person and collection of documents during the stakeholders'

¹ <https://www.measureevaluation.org/resources/publications/ms-19-158.html>

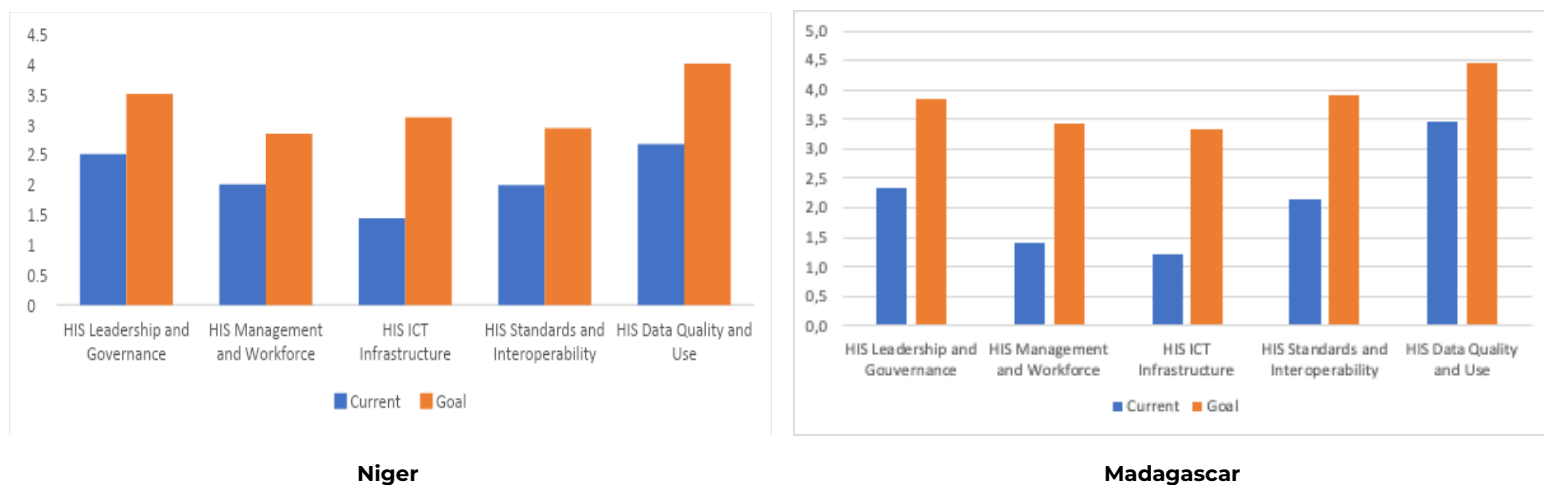
		meeting
SOCI workshop	Data collection and analysis workshop (including working groups with plenary presentations) determine the actual and goal HIS status	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training of the evaluation team 2. Data collection and analysis 3. Consensus building to determine the actual and goal HIS status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discussion and consensus in small groups -Discussion and consensus in plenary session 4. Orientation session on activities prioritization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discussion and consensus in small groups -Discussion and consensus in plenary session 5. Analysis and finalization of the planning
Other workshops	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data analysis and consensus building to determine the actual and goal HIS status 2. Orientation session and activities prioritization 3. Analysis and finalization of the planning 	
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Start: January 6, 2022 ● SOCI workshop: January 26 to 28, 2022 ● Analysis, prioritization, and finalization: March–June 2022 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Start: September 23, 2022 ● SOCI Workshop: October 3–7, 2022
Additional assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Previous HIS Strategic Plan Assessment ● ICT Assessment ● DHIS2 Maturity Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Previous HIS Strategic Plan Assessment ● Rapid RHIS Assessment

A major difference in the SOCI assessment process between the two countries was the process through which consensus was built from the identification of weaknesses to the recommendations. In Niger, groups were each assigned to one HIS domain, assessed that domain, then presented their domain to the plenary for consensus building. In Madagascar, each group was assigned to at least two domains and conducted a more detailed assessment process. Findings from similar domains were compiled in one workbook and reassigned to one group for consolidation. This initial consolidation was subsequently presented in a plenary for general consensus building. Opportunity was given first to the group previously assigned to that specific domain to provide input, and then groups who had not worked on that area were also encouraged to provide feedback. This multi-step consensus-building approach enabled more engagement, and helped each subdomain to be effectively addressed. Madagascar's approach to consensus building also helped to reinforce the final consensus and provided more evidence to support the scores assigned to each domain, component, and subcomponent.

In Madagascar, the assessment process took place in a relatively short amount of time. By focusing on specific domains and not all of them, groups moved more quickly than the groups discussing all domains in Niger. Thus, the meeting with stakeholders was an opportunity to complete the collection of necessary baseline documents. In addition, the methodological approach used in Madagascar contributed to this shorter time frame. There was the SOCI orientation session, data collection, consensus building around the current and future HIS status, identification of interventions and actions, and orientation session on prioritization of activities.

In Madagascar, the evaluation was focused on the RHIS. Conducting a Rapid RHIS Assessment focused on data management standards provided an opportunity to confirm and complement the SOCI results using a tool similar to SOCI but adapted to the RHIS. It confirmed the SOCI results and provided more detailed information broken down by level of the health pyramid with more detailed activity proposals.

Figure 1: SOCI current scores and target scores by HIS domain in Niger (left) and Madagascar (right)



RESULTS + NEXT STEPS

SOCI is a powerful tool with a well-planned process that provides a thorough overview of the current maturity level of the HIS and clearly defines a roadmap for progression over time. In contrast to the HMN tool, SOCI can be implemented within a reasonable timeframe of one to two months. The collaborative and transparent SOCI assessment process results in stakeholder consensus for a roadmap that will lead to HIS progression.

Following the SOCI assessments in Madagascar and Niger, the HIS strategic planning processes are underway in both countries. The results of the SOCI assessment are providing a reliable baseline to guide future plans.

Acknowledging that the RHIS is the mainstay of the HIS in most countries with limited resources, coupling the SOCI and the Rapid RHIS Assessment is a helpful way to confirm and complement the results. Other countries planning HIS assessments can learn from the approaches taken in Niger and Madagascar and tailor the SOCI assessment process to their own context.



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