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Eastern and Southern Caribbean (ESC) Region

Country Health Information Systems and Data Use (CHISU) Program

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Caribbean islands are particularly vulnerable to external shocks from natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and economic decline. This is largely due to their geographic location and economic structure, which is heavily dependent on climate-related activities such as tourism and agriculture. The shock from pandemics like COVID-19 can therefore have devastating effects on the health sector due to increased demand for health services. The occurrence and duration of disease outbreaks are particularly difficult to predict, with outbreaks often being transmitted from one country to another—especially given the high level of international and regional travel.



Within the Caribbean region, data on COVID-19 cases are reported to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) regional office from national ministries of health. Even though this data provides insights on trends and hotspots in the region, there are weaknesses in the timeliness, completeness, and accuracy of this data. These weaknesses have contributed to significant challenges in COVID-19 decision making within each country.

Several lessons have been learned in the region and beyond from the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the need to strengthen health information systems (HIS) to ensure adequate preparedness for future health emergencies.

CHISU is supporting governments in the Caribbean region to strengthen their COVID-19 response, improve supply chain management, and provide overall support to improve health information systems.

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



How is CHISU supporting digital transformation in ESC?

Supporting the region's COVID-19 response

CHISU has been supporting ministries of health in five ESC countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, and Suriname) to identify COVID-19 data gaps that could hinder their timely and effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To do this, CHISU is providing technical assistance to each of these countries' ministries of health to support improved data collection, aggregation, analysis, and use of COVID-19 vaccination data.

Additionally, CHISU has supported the production of communication materials highlighting USAID's support to the COVID-19 response in the region. These materials have included fifteen monthly newsletters distributed to the White House, ESC embassies, and other U.S. Government stakeholders and which highlighted COVID-19 case and vaccination data from countries in the region, as well as descriptions of CHISU and other partners' activities around COVID-19.

Providing HIS support across the region

CHISU provided short-term technical assistance in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to establish a supply chain strategic plan and develop HIS requirements to improve delivery of health commodities in the country. This initiative included a desk review of available documentation; onsite facility assessments; and workshops around supply chain strategy and information technology systems requirements.

In addition, CHISU is helping develop and launch the Caribbean HIS Technical Support Facility through support to the University of the West Indies' Center for Health Economics. This facility will help institutionalize HIS technical support in the Caribbean region by providing consistent availability of HIS technical capacity outside of country governments; being a source for consistent, standards-based HIS guidance; serving as a regional collaboration platform for benchmarking against expected HIS performance; and more.

The program is also helping plan a regional HIS learning exchange to bring together stakeholders to exchange lessons learned and strategize around integrated health information management following COVID-19.



Above: Bill Keough (Senior Technical Advisor, Supply Chain) discusses health systems integration during a workshop in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG).

Below: Alpha Nsaghurwe (Digital Health Technical Advisor) assesses the storage approach for stock in the Central Medical Warehouse during an on-site visit in SVG.





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