



Developing an automated malaria bulletin application to strengthen data use in Malawi

Background

Malaria is a major cause of morbidity and mortality across age groups in Malawi—and the disease is endemic in more than 95 percent of the country.¹ This means that it's critical to have high-quality data available for evaluating program effectiveness and understanding where to target future malaria control efforts.

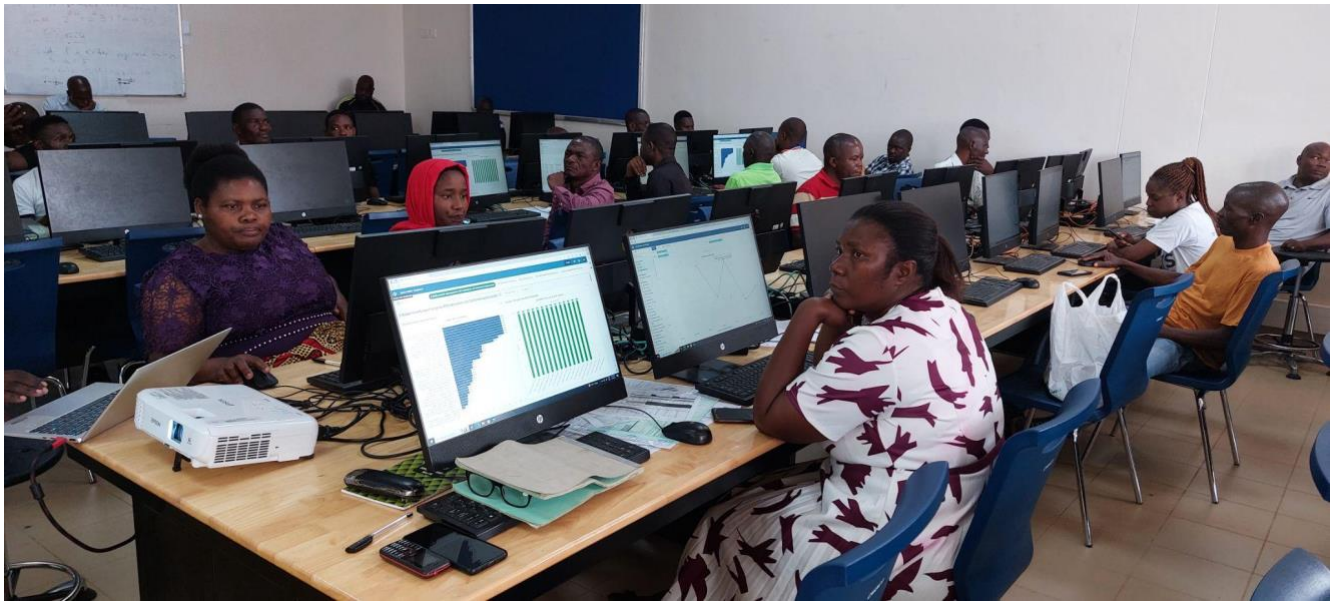
Historically, people working on malaria control in Malawi had to perform manual analyses to generate important indicators of the disease's spread, its severity in people who have been infected, and how well it's been addressed by health facilities across the country. To make it easier to get these indicators, USAID's Country Health Information Systems and Data Use (CHISU) program supported the development and integration of a malaria bulletin into the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2) platform and subsequent training for malaria data users across the country.

This bulletin aggregates all relevant malaria indicators, including performance indicators (like diagnosis and treatment rates), epidemiology indicators (like incidence, severe cases, and deaths), and commodities used (like the number of insecticide-treated nets distributed). This aggregation allows users to select specific review periods and organization units—ranging from the national level to the facility level.

¹ PMI. "Malawi." Accessed May 14, 2024. <https://www.pmi.gov/where-we-work/malawi-2/>.

Steps Taken

Since the creation of the malaria bulletin, CHISU has conducted comprehensive training workshops across all districts in Malawi. During one of the workshops, CHISU staff trained 82 district malaria coordinators and Health Management Information System (HMIS) Officers who also meticulously reviewed the bulletin's functionality and developed bulletins for their respective districts. Additionally, staff from Malawi's National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) monitoring and evaluation team also generated and validated the national bulletin.



Participants at a training workshop. Photo credit: CHISU

Results + Next Steps

Feedback from workshop trainees demonstrated the effectiveness of this new approach. District officers and health professionals can now access and use the malaria bulletin for routine data reviews and in turn help make informed decisions about malaria control efforts in a timely way. The bulletin's seamless integration within the DHIS2 platform eliminates the need for extraction and outside DHIS2 analysis, ensuring efficient data processing and use.

“The use of the bulletin application will definitely enhance use of data in strengthening malaria surveillance,” said Hacque Twaibu, a Ministry of Health (MOH) Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for an MOH program on integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI). “I would like to see this expanded to other programs so that we strengthen data across the entire health sector.”

The bulletin is also user-friendly and pulls together a comprehensive picture of the malaria situation in Malawi—enabling timely decision making and empowering health care professionals at all levels of the system.

Moving forward, the bulletin will be used during routine data review meetings and learning sessions. CHISU will therefore continue to provide mentorship on how to generate the bulletin and monitor its use to improve data use.



This publication was produced with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of #7200AA20CA00009. Views expressed are not necessarily those of USAID or the United States government.

