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HEALTH SYSTEMS 20/20
better systems, better health

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Health Systems 20/20 and Measuring and Monitoring Health System Performance

The Challenge

Implementing health plans and policies that are based on evidence requires monitoring, evaluating, and communicating health system performance measures. Developing countries often have an abundance of information about their health system – their challenge is to bring together the many different sources and types of data that are produced, so that the information can inform decision making. Data that are tied to external programs may have distinct and competing requirements that are not relevant to domestic stakeholder needs. Furthermore, data that are routinely collected may not be linked to data that are intermittently collected, leading to an incomplete picture of the health system and its performance.

The Health Systems 20/20 Approach

For data to be useful to country stakeholders and absorbed into policies, the data must be timely and relevant to their specific needs. Health Systems 20/20 provides and maximizes the use of a set of established and innovative tools that allow countries to rapidly create specific yet standardized measurements that are comparable internationally and over time. The project works with country counterparts to implement:

● Health System Assessments (HSA): This methodology tracks indicators from the World Health Organization's six building blocks to identify relative strengths and weaknesses of the health system, priority issues, and recommendations to improve health outcomes. HSA findings are used for a wide variety of activities, including defining interventions, developing funding requests, and informing country strategic planning initiatives.

● Geographic Information Systems (GIS): GIS technology enables policymakers to identify and visually present trends that inform program planning and decision making, and to correlate service delivery with health outcomes.

● Health System Database: This web-based tool allows users to analyze and compile standardized country data from internationally comparable sources such as the World Health Organization, World Bank, and country Demographic and Health Surveys. The database provides stakeholders with a broader understanding of their country's health system and helps

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them benchmark performance against other countries or regions, and monitor progress toward achieving goals.

Along with these tools, Health Systems 20/20 is promoting strengthened health information systems (HIS) by improving the linkages between health care entities at the local, regional, and central levels. This approach aims to increase the flow of accurate, relevant, and complete data so that information is readily available to policymakers.

Applying Our Approach

Health Systems 20/20's support to improve the measuring and monitoring of health system performance includes the following:

"We need planning based on facts to address our human resource needs."

Physician in Cote d'Ivoire

- HSAs have been conducted in more than 20 countries. The methodology is continually modified to meet specific country needs, to be implemented at the regional and national level, and to assess specific health areas like HIV or maternal-child health. The results and recommendations have been used as a means to benchmark the health system before implementing a new intervention, to inform strategic plans and policies, and to assess progress towards achieving health system targets.

- GIS-based technology tools have been used in Yemen and are currently being leveraged in Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire. In Yemen, GIS was used to generate data that informed policymakers of human resource needs and how to allocate financial resources across the health sector, in addition to non-health needs like the provision of electricity and election polling places.

- HIS have been strengthened to improve data availability, quality, and use. In Kenya, Health Systems 20/20 developed a Master Facilities List – a database located at the central level of the health system that assigns identification codes to all health facilities within the country – to capture administrative and service availability data. In Yemen, the project partnered with the Extended Program on Immunization to implement a set of HIS tools that collects immunization data from health facilities. As a result of the data collected, refrigerators and cold chain gas replacements have been demanded, and awareness campaigns are being planned in districts with low vaccination coverage.

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