

Strengthening Human Resources Information Systems

To Learn More:

Pamela McQuide, RN, PhD, Workforce Planning Advisor, pmcquide@capacityproject.org

Dykki Settle, Information Systems Advisor, dsettle@capacityproject.org

Why Strengthen Human Resources Information Systems?

Many low-resource countries are facing daunting obstacles to meeting the health care needs of their people. To ensure that the right health care provider is in the right place with the right skills, these countries need current, accurate data on human resources for health (HRH). A strong human resources information system (HRIS) helps health care leaders quickly answer the key policy questions affecting health care service delivery:

- **Workforce Planning:** Are enough health care workers being trained to meet the projected need? How might policy changes affect the health workforce?
- **Training:** Are students discontinuing pre-service education before entering the workforce, and if so, why? Are health workers receiving in-service training? Do they have the training necessary for their jobs?
- **Service Delivery:** Are health workers employed in posts that match their education and training? Are health workers optimally deployed in locations to meet national health priorities? How many workers need to be recruited to fulfill anticipated vacancies?
- **Retention:** How many health workers are leaving the workforce? What are the causes of attrition for health care workers? What initiatives are effective in keeping them in priority posts, and how are they affecting attrition rates?
- **Productivity:** Are the workers that are in place being as productive as possible given current conditions? What interventions help health care workers be more productive?



Ministry of Health staff updating personnel files the old-fashioned way in Zanzibar.

What Is an HRIS?

An HRIS provides health sector leaders and managers with the information needed to assess HR problems, plan effective interventions and evaluate those interventions. An HRIS can be as simple as a filing cabinet of paper personnel files or as complex as a multi-database system with the capacity to analyze workforce problems and possible solutions. The strength of an HRIS does not depend on technology but on its ability to generate information that is accurate and timely and can be adapted to address new issues.

In the Project's approach, many stakeholders are involved. Ministries, licensing and certification bodies, private-sector organizations and other stakeholders work together to develop a mature and complete HRIS that tracks health professionals from the time they enter training until they leave the health workforce. In each country, a Stakeholder Leadership Group has ownership of the HRIS and the Project's efforts focus on developing their capacity to use, support and improve the system after the Capacity Project's assistance has ended.

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What Has the Capacity Project Accomplished?

- Assessed field needs and developed the Project's HRIS strengthening approach
- Developed the iHRIS suite of three software systems (which can be quickly customized for local needs):
 - **iHRIS Qualify** tracks health worker training, certification and licensure
 - **iHRIS Manage** maintains personnel deployment, performance and attrition information
 - **iHRIS Plan** models long-term health workforce needs
- Implementation of iHRIS Qualify under way in Uganda, led by the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Council
- Implementation of iHRIS Manage under way in Rwanda, led by the Ministry of Health
- Developed HRIS step solution in Swaziland, where it is currently being used
- Completed initial stakeholder meetings and developed plans for HRIS strengthening in Lesotho, Namibia, Kenya, Southern Sudan and Tanzania/Zanzibar.

What Have We Learned?

- Key issues for stakeholders to address are data ownership, policies for data sharing and policy questions that the HRIS will answer
- In order for the HRIS to be successful and sustainable, national ownership and capacity building must be priorities from the early planning stages
- Data frequently exist in small dataset or paper files that are not necessarily known by all the key stakeholders. Bringing together all HRIS stakeholders, often for the first time in the same room, ensures that information is shared and helps the group quickly reach consensus for making good use of the data that do exist
- Capacity building is often needed in the areas of developing strong data collection systems, using data for planning and managing human resources and providing technical support for the system and its infrastructure
- Free and Open Source software solutions offer the best alternative for decreasing costs of implementation and ongoing maintenance of the HRIS, as well as providing a global community for support and continuous improvement
- Inter-country knowledge sharing as part of the HRIS strengthening process provides models that help avoid repeating mistakes and standardize HR data throughout a region.

For more information and to view software demonstrations, visit the HRIS Strengthening website: www.capacityproject.org/hris/



The Capacity Project
IntraHealth International, Inc.
6340 Quadrangle Drive
Suite 200
Chapel Hill, NC 27517
Tel. (919) 313-9100
Fax (919) 313-9108
info@capacityproject.org
www.capacityproject.org

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