

## Strengthening Human Resources Information Systems

### To Learn More:

Dykki Settle, Director of Health Informatics, [dsettle@capacityproject.org](mailto:dsettle@capacityproject.org)

Pamela McQuide, RN, PhD, Workforce Planning Advisor, [pmcquide@capacityproject.org](mailto:pmcquide@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?
- **Qualifications:** Are health workers meeting continuing education requirements for licensure? Have workers been assessed competent in the qualifications required 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?



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 to be adapted to address new HRH 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.

continued



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

This publication is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of IntraHealth International and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

## What Has the Capacity Project Accomplished?

- Developed the Project's five-step HRIS strengthening approach
- Developed and released 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
- Developed and released a Windows desktop version of the iHRIS Suite for use in decentralized locations such as facilities and district offices
- Installed iHRIS Qualify at four professional councils in Uganda
- Installed iHRIS Manage at the Ministries of Health in Rwanda, Uganda and Zanzibar
- Installed iHRIS Manage in HR offices in three states in Southern Sudan
- Piloted iHRIS Plan in Namibia
- Developed HRIS step solutions in Swaziland and Lesotho
- Initiated HRIS strengthening activities in Botswana, Kenya and Tanzania
- Conducted training on using HR data to make evidence-based decisions in Uganda, Swaziland, Rwanda and Southern Sudan.

## What Have We Learned?

- In order for the HRIS to be successful and sustainable, national ownership and capacity building must be priorities from the early planning stages.
- Key issues for stakeholders to address are data ownership, policies for data sharing and policy questions that the HRIS will answer.
- Data frequently exist in small datasets or paper files that are not necessarily known by all stakeholders. Bringing together 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.
- HRIS solutions should be designed around country needs as identified by system stakeholders. The HRIS must be flexible and adaptable in meeting emerging needs after it is developed. Use cases have proven to be an effective method of prioritizing stakeholder requirements and communicating those requirements to system developers.
- 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.
- In order for a system to be effective it must be used. A key step in strengthening HRIS is creating a culture of routinely using data as a basis for decision making.

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

## The Capacity Project Partnership

INTRAHEALTH  
INTERNATIONAL

innovating to save lives

Jhpiego

an affiliate of Johns Hopkins University

PATH  
A catalyst for global health

IMA  
WORLDHEALTH  
ADVANCING HEALTH & HEALING  
THE WORLD OVER

LATH  
LIVERPOOL ASSOCIATES  
IN TROPICAL HEALTH

TRG

MSH  
MANAGEMENT SCIENCES for HEALTH

a nonprofit organization strengthening health programs worldwide