Regional Committee for Africa

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Progress report on the Framework for integrating country and regional health data in the African Region: regional health Data Hub 2024–2030

Information document

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Background

1.   In an effort to address the challenges of data fragmentation and non-interoperability of existing data systems in the WHO African Region, the 74th Regional Committee adopted the Framework for integrating country and regional health data in the African Region: regional health Data Hub 2024–2030 (AFR/RC74/7).[1] The framework aims to ensure seamless data integration, leading to improved analytics, better tracking of health trends and evidence-based decision-making to advance health outcomes.

2.   The framework focuses on technology and governance. The technology aspect involves establishing a regional health data hub (RHDHub) to integrate health data for better data use and evidence generation. The governance aspect involves developing a regional data governance framework to regulate data management, privacy and security.

3.   The framework outlines four milestones to be attained by 2025: (a) stakeholders, including Member States, are engaged in the requirement of the RHDHub; (b) a regional working group is established to develop the data governance framework; (c) the alpha (first) version of the RHDHub, with core functionality is launched; and (d) the hub's interoperability is tested with selected Member States and regional databases.

4.   This is the first report, which summarizes the progress made in implementing the 2025 milestones.

Progress made/action taken

5.   The Secretariat conducted five consultative meetings with key stakeholders to develop the framework and architecture of the proposed data hub and data governance framework. Extensive internal consultations were also conducted across various programmes to finalize the proposed architecture, consolidate user requirements and ensure harmonization with existing data systems. Following these consultations, user and system requirements were finalized and documented, the proposed data hub architecture was officially approved, and cybersecurity risks were thoroughly assessed.

6.   The Secretariat developed a draft data governance framework to harness data use at both the country and regional levels, while ensuring security. The draft data governance framework document is under review by internal stakeholders and Member States. It is designed to enable the Region and Member States to effectively manage, protect and leverage data assets to support evidence-based decision-making towards achieving health outcomes and impact. The governance framework addresses data standardization and regulation in the areas of data availability, accessibility, use, sharing, privacy and security. Efforts have been made to align it with existing WHO data policies and principles. A broader consultation has been initiated, involving WHO at all three levels, Member States and partners to review the hub's usability. Additionally, a Regional inter-cluster technical working group has been established to work on the data governance framework.

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[1]   https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/378856

7.   The first (alpha) version of the regional health data hub has been developed and is currently hosted by the Secretariat.[2] It has been launched in a secure cloud platform with core functionalities such as country and indicator pages, and metadata functionality. These core functionalities pave the way to better explore the African Region's key health information in one platform.

8.   The alpha version of the RHDHub integrated data from multiple sources by establishing interoperability with existing systems, including communicable and noncommunicable district health information software, version 2 (DHIS2) instances, the emergency integrated disease surveillance and response (IDSR) DHIS2 instance, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) data and the integrated African Health Observatory (iAHO). Additionally, the hub incorporates external data sources, such as climate data, that enable a broader analytical perspective, taking into consideration risk factors, including climate change. The alpha version of the RHDHub is capable of facilitating data aggregation from multiple sources, advancing metadata management and enabling data triangulation.

9.   The Secretariat will continue efforts to establish interoperability with other existing data systems at the Regional Office and in selected Member States, enabling automated data exchange capabilities.

Issues and challenges

10.   Some existing data systems lack full interoperability, requiring manual data uploads from incompatible systems. This has delayed the data integration process into the RHDHub.

Next steps

11.   Member States should:

(a)   sign a data sharing agreement with WHO AFRO to facilitate interoperability and automated data exchange with the Regional health data hub.

(b)   promote interoperability of existing data systems at the country level, to ease data exchange with the hub.

(c)   establish or strengthen national data governance bodies to oversee data policies and standards.

12.   WHO and partners should:

(a)   align the Regional health data hub with existing regional and global health data hubs for harmonization.

(b)   partner with research institutions to conduct feasibility studies on using advanced analytics for public health interventions.

(c)   develop standardized data dictionaries, coding systems and metadata templates.

(d)   review and align the data governance framework with other similar global and regional data governance frameworks.

13.   The Regional Committee is invited to note this progress report.

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2   https://data.afro.who.int