

Data for Impact: eHealth Africa's Data Portal as a Strategic Tool for Informed Decision Making and Coordinated Policy Efforts

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KEY MESSAGES

- The eHealth Africa Data Portal is a pivotal tool in collecting, managing, and analyzing health data, driving informed decision-making.
- With access to real-time, robust health data, governments and health stakeholders can implement targeted interventions and better allocate resources.
- Data-driven policy actions can improve health outcomes by identifying health trends, gaps, and needs.
- The portal can enhance collaboration between health sectors, strengthening cross-government and multi-stakeholder efforts for national health priorities.

Introduction

The evolving landscape of public health demands innovative solutions that can respond to challenges swiftly and effectively. As Africa faces complex health issues like infectious diseases, malnutrition, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure, the need for robust data systems is even greater. In this context, the eHealth Africa Data Portal is a vital tool designed to harness the power of data to inform and guide health interventions. By offering a centralized platform that gathers, analyzes, and visualizes health data from various regions, the portal enables stakeholders: from policymakers to health practitioners to make evidence-based decisions and coordinate actions more efficiently.



Overview of eHealth Africa Data Portal

In 2010, during the polio eradication initiative, eHealth Africa realised that the severity of polio in Nigeria was a result of missed vaccinations in settlements that were not captured on the map. So, they supported the eradication initiative in Nigeria by collecting geo-spatial data to create more accurate micro plans for these areas to ensure that no settlement was missed. The improvement allowed easier identification of the different points of interest, such as health facilities and other buildings serving as vaccination sites. This led to a significant improvement, and a substantial reduction in the cases in the region. The data gathered was open-sourced so that individuals or organisations can access the data and utilize it to provide solutions. The data portal has curated different points of interest for data collection,

and they can essentially be used for planning. It comprises relevant data, including administrative boundaries, settlement data, population estimate, and several data points covering the health sector, educational sector, and much more.

The eHealth Africa Data Portal is an advanced digital platform that aggregates diverse datasets related to public health. It integrates real-time data from healthcare facilities, local communities, government health agencies, and global health organizations. The portal allows users to access a range of health indicators, from disease surveillance and vaccination rates to maternal and child health metrics. Designed for accessibility and user-friendliness, it provides interactive dashboards, data visualizations, and downloadable reports to ensure a comprehensive understanding of public health trends.

The portal has at least 900 detailed maps. It is an interactive and intuitive map and is useful for research, planning and monitoring disease outbreaks and health intervention within Nigeria. The map works across 33 datasets and 12 sectors such as commerce, agriculture, education, energy, water and sanitation, etc, therefore it can be used to execute any other social impact project. It also facilitates transparency, making information publicly available for scrutiny and ensuring that decision-making is grounded in reliable evidence.

Goals of the Portal

Support Evidence-Based Decision Making:

Based on the real-time data it has, it allows for well-informed decisions ensuring that interventions are effective and aligned with the health needs of the population.

Strengthen Health System Performance:

By providing an up-to-date view of health system operations and performance, the portal can help identify areas requiring improvement, thus fostering continuous quality improvement.

Enable Coordinated Policy Actions:

The portal helps to enhance coordination between different levels of government and health sectors, ensuring that policies are aligned, and resources are optimized for the most urgent health priorities.

Promote Transparency and Accountability:

By making health data accessible and understandable, the portal empowers citizens, health workers, and civil society organizations to hold governments accountable for the implementation of health policies.

Facilitate Collaboration Across Stakeholders:

The portal provides a shared platform where health authorities, donors, NGOs, and the private sector can work together on data-driven projects, aligning efforts toward common health goals.

Empowering Health System Governance Through Data-Driven Insights

The eHealth Africa Data Portal is not just a data repository; it is a strategic tool that enhances health system governance through various mechanisms. By providing a centralized platform for the collection, analysis, and sharing of health data, the portal plays a pivotal role in improving decision-making, accountability, and collaboration among health system stakeholders. Through its data-driven insights, the portal can strengthen governance by addressing key challenges and improving the transparency, efficiency, and responsiveness of health systems. Below are some of the key mechanisms through which the portal can contribute to better health systems governance:

Informed Policy Development and Implementation

The portal can serve as a vital resource for policy formulation by offering comprehensive, real-time health data. Policymakers and government officials can use the data to assess the effectiveness of existing policies and identify areas for improvement. By basing decisions on empirical evidence rather than assumptions, governments can design policies that are more likely to address the specific needs of their populations, thus improving the overall governance of the health system.

Enhanced Transparency and Accountability

One of the cornerstones of effective health system governance is transparency. The eHealth Africa Data

Portal can promote openness by making health data publicly accessible, allowing citizens, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to track the progress of health initiatives. This transparency fosters accountability, ensuring that health authorities are answerable for their decisions and actions.

Improved Monitoring and Evaluation

The portal can enable real-time monitoring of health programs and interventions, providing critical data on the performance of health services across regions. This allows for continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of various health policies and programs, highlighting areas where improvements are needed.

Strengthened Coordination Across Stakeholders

Effective governance of health systems requires seamless coordination among various actors, including government agencies, international organizations, private-sector partners, and non-governmental organizations. The portal will serve as a shared platform that facilitates communication and collaboration across these diverse stakeholders.

Data-Driven Decision-Making

The portal can empower health leaders with the data needed to make informed decisions. By providing access to a wide range of health indicators from disease outbreaks to vaccination rates, stakeholders can identify patterns, trends, and emerging threats in real-time.

CONCLUSION

The eHealth Africa Data Portal is more than just a technological tool; it is a catalyst for improved health outcomes across the continent. By putting data at the center of decision-making processes, it enables health authorities to take proactive steps in addressing public health challenges. As data continues to

play an essential role in shaping the future of healthcare, the portal provides a unique opportunity to enhance evidence-based decision-making, support coordinated policy actions, and create a more efficient, transparent, and accountable health system in Africa. The strategic use of this tool holds the key to unlocking a healthier future for all.

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