



Country Ownership Strategies: Leadership Forum on Health Information Systems

Country ownership is broadly embraced by the international donor community as a critical element of international development. In August 2009, in Ethiopia, the first of a series of regional Health Information Systems (HIS) forums to engage national leadership in HIS ownership was convened. National delegates from six East African countries representing the Ministries of Health, Finance, Telecommunications, and allied development sectors met to discuss and develop next steps in the implementation of their national HIS. Country delegations left the forum with a newly found sense of collaboration and purpose and with concrete next-step action plans to be implemented with already committed donor assistance.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), funded by PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), collaborated with other donors in the planning and implementation of the East Africa forum. Organizing sponsors included The World Bank; World Health Organization; Health Metrics Network; International Telecommunication Union; East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community; and others.

Strengthened HIS operations form the backbone for information and data exchange and of sustainable development, accountability, transparency, and evidence-based decision-making. At the forum, participants develop strategies to strengthen national HIS and prepare a country-led action plan. Facilitated sessions help country delegates to reach a common vision and to articulate immediate next steps to implement their country-owned strategy. The forum builds on ongoing efforts to strengthen national HIS and accelerate the process for implementation, including building country institutions' capacity for HIS.

"This was the first time MoH, MoICT, Bureau of Statistics, and Office of Budget and Planning have ever gotten together to discuss an action plan for HIS...[this] is really good."

– Member, Uganda Delegation

Based on the success of the East Africa forum, and the high priority placed on country ownership by many donors, the next forum is planned for nine countries in the Southern Africa region: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This forum will be hosted by the Government of Namibia. Joining their colleagues will be selected participants from the East Africa forum who will share their experiences in a South-South learning experience and collaboration.

The Southern Africa Leadership Forum on Health Information Systems will be held in **Windhoek, Namibia, October 25-29, 2010**. It is supported by the sponsors whose logos can be found below. They invest in, promote, and actively work toward sustainable, country-owned HIS which are crucial to the success of national health programs throughout the world.

For general information, visit the HIS Forum web site at www.hisforum.org.

To become a co-sponsor or if you have questions about this effort, contact the HIS Forum Secretariat at myhisforum@gmail.com.

