Snowball Effect of Data Competition in Mali

In 2018, Mali held a friendly competition among health facilities to motivate all levels of the health system to improve the quality of health data and to make strategic use of those data. The first competition came as Mali had successfully adopted and deployed the District Health Information Software, version 2 (DHIS2) platform for management of health data across the health system.

What began in 2018 as a data quality incentive designed by the Mali Ministry of Health (MOH) has won enthusiastic adoption by health providers across the health system. Not only has it attracted more competitors (from 2018 to the second competition in 2019), it also has demonstrably improved the quality of health data across the board. The MOH intends to institutionalize the competition, has included it in its priority health management information system (HMIS) activities, and is planning a third competition in 2020.

In 2018, the competition rewarded eight health facilities (five community health centers [CSCom], two health districts [CSRef], and one hospital) for improving their data quality from 2017 to 2018. In 2019, the MOH rewarded 16 health facilities (10 CSCom, four CSRef, and two hospitals). Achievement in meeting the criteria for judging data quality (100% data completeness and 80% timeliness) improved significantly from the 2018 competition to the 2019 competition and the number of facilities competing grew from 65 in 2018 to 308 in 2019 (an almost fivefold increase).

Presidium at the 2019 data quality competition. Photo: MEASURE Evaluation.

The technical advisor from the Ministry of Health presented a speech at the awards ceremony. Photo: MEASURE Evaluation.

Background

In August 2015, Mali adopted DHIS2 for the management of routine health data. This choice was motivated by recommendations from an assessment of the local health information system (HIS) using the Performance of Routine Information System Management (PRISM) tools developed by MEASURE Evaluation, a project funded by the United States Agency

for International Development (USAID). The MOH had conducted the assessment in 2013.

MEASURE Evaluation, with funding USAID, helped Mali to deploy DHIS2 in all regions by September 2019. Coverage ranged from 98 percent for CSComs to 100 percent for health regional directorates (DRS) and CSRefs. DHIS2 use has allowed the MOH to improve the collection, transmission,

processing, analysis, security, availability, confidentiality, and quality of data.

In 2018 the first competition's winners were from three regions: Mopti, Ségou, and Kayes. In addition to rewarding facility winners, the MOH issued diplomas of satisfaction to some central structures (programs and directorates) and to some DRS for their efforts in deploying DHIS2 in their regions.

Competition Details

The competition begins with the CPS announcing it, then developing selection criteria for each health facility level, and next establishing two commissions from the DHIS2 technical committee. One commission evaluates the health facilities and selects the winners (according to data completeness and timeliness) and shares best practices. The other commission organizes the awards ceremony, including prizes, a venue, and invitations.

Results

Positive competition emulation

The first competition, organized in June 2018, had created a positive rivalry among health facilities. Those that became champions of sharing and promoting good practices in health information have inspired many others. Some regional directors of health have challenged themselves to have the most winners during the second competition. Some health districts and hospitals have sought to create friendly competition in their regions through local initiatives to create a positive rivalry among local providers in producing high-quality data. The effects of these efforts were shown in better performance in the 2019 competition.

In the Kayes Region, health facilities participate in monthly competitions. The director of the health district initiated a motivation system similar to the national competition to encourage CSComs to provide all expected data quality reports on time. Each month, the data from CSComs are reviewed during a meeting with CSComs and district teams. The three

MEASURE Evaluation's Chief of Party in Mali, Aminata Traoré, gave a speech at the awards ceremony. Photo: MEASURE Evaluation.

The participants who actively contributed in the competition were awarded prizes. Photo: MEASURE Evaluation.

best-performing CSComs are rewarded as follows: the first-place CSCOM receives 40,000 Financial Community of Africa (CFA) francs, the second-place winner receives 20,000 CFA francs, and the third-place winner receives 15,000 CFA francs. These competitions are now in the third round and starting to boost the completeness and timeliness rates of health facilities. The district's goal is to be among the winners of the third national competition in 2020.

Another example of the success of the competition is the increase in the number of regions with winners. In the second round, champions came from six regions versus three during the first competition, adding Koulikoro, Sikasso, and Gao Regions to the high-performing health facilities.

Encouraging wider involvement

Mali Hospital won first prize for hospitals in the 2018 competition but not in 2019. After the 2019 awards ceremony, the director organized a meeting with that hospital's HMIS officers to understand the reasons for the loss. The health regional director of Kayes instructed the directors of all health districts to closely monitor data management so that the region could have more winners in next year's competition. Also, the Bamako regional director of health challenged her health facilities to be part of the 2020 competition winners. The Ansongo Health District

held a local award ceremony for the Tassiga CSCom, one of the winners of the second round whoes staff had been unable to travel to Bamako to receive the prize. All the high officials of the prefecture including the head took part in the ceremony.

An inspiration for other health interventions

The competition on data quality production has inspired other health interventions to compete. One example is a new "cleanest health center" competition designed to strengthen hygiene standards in health facilities. This competition was supported by another USAID project, Service de Santé à Grand Impact (SSGI).

Conclusion

The MOH has adopted and institutionalized the competition activity that was suggested by MEASURE Evaluation as a way to motivate data management officers to do their best work and be rewarded for their effort. It now seems the competition is effective and popular, and likely to be sustainable.