

Second Consultative Workshop on Research Data Access and Use for Public Health Decision-Making

Meeting Brief - December 2023

Key messages

Delegates from Ministry of Health, County Departments of Health, health facilities, and academia/ research convened on 17th October 2023 for a Second Consultative Workshop on Research Data Access and Use for Public Health Decision-Making. During this Workshop, delegates discussed pathways towards implementing priority recommendations identified during a prior [consultative workshop held on 23rd May 2023](#).

Common themes across the proposed implementation pathways were:

- **Developing the capacity of health facility and county staff** to interpret data and participate in dissemination of findings and recommendations to a wide range of stakeholders through professional development and academic training.
- **Co-development of digitalization and dissemination strategies** between researchers, health facility staff, and County Departments of Health.
- Establishment of **interoperable data systems**. It was highlighted that there are some implementing partners currently working with Ministry of Health on this aspect.
- A need for **demystification of the Kenya Data Protection Act**, including clarification of its scope vs that of the Public Health Act.
- **Curation and harmonization of existing standard operating procedures and policies** governing data collection, management, sharing and access, as well as their expansion to support recommended new activities and processes.
- **Establishment/ strengthening of county research committees**.
- **Commitment of resources** by researchers, national government, county governments and implementation partners to support the proposed activities.

We call on colleagues in Ministry of Health, County Departments of Health, academia/ research, and implementation partners to collaborate towards implementation of the proposed activities.

Background

As part of a [Consultative Workshop](#) held on 23rd May 2023, stakeholders representing Ministry of Health, County Departments of Health, health facilities and academia/ research recommended various approaches to optimize access to and use of data for public health planning and decision-making. A similar set of stakeholders convened on 17th October 2023 to discuss pathways towards implementation of a prioritized set of these recommendations.

Prioritization of recommendations

During the initial Consultative Workshop, [seven recommendations](#) were provided. To ensure that there would be sufficient time to comprehensively discuss pathways towards implementing the key recommendations, workshop attendees were requested to prioritize the recommendations in descending order of priority. Individual anonymous responses were collected and collated using an online poll application to generate a prioritized list of recommendations (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Recommendations to optimize access to and use of data for public health planning/ decision-making in order of priority

Workshop attendees discussed pathways towards implementing the top four recommendations, i.e.:

1. Strengthening the capacity of County Department of Health officials to interpret and evaluate research findings.
2. Development of standardized protocols and associated standard operating procedures (SOPs) for routine surveillance data access and sharing.
3. Digitization and integration of routine surveillance data.
4. Development of pathways for communicating research findings and recommendations to end users.



Pathways to implementing priority recommendations

Delegates at the Second Consultative Workshop identified the key activities, timelines and stakeholders needed to implement the respective priority recommendations. These are described in detail in the following sections.

Priority Recommendation 1. Strengthening the capacity of County Department of Health officials to interpret and evaluate research findings

Key activities	Timeline	Stakeholders
<p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In analysis and interpretation of research data • In research synthesis and translation • Opportunities through continuing medical education (CME), symposia, workshops, special research themed days, short course research training programs, and academic training at master's and doctoral level 	Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National government/ Ministry of Health • County Department of Health leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Executives ○ Health management teams • Health workers • Researchers • Media • Implementation partners
Sensitization of County Department of Health staff on the importance of research and evidence-based practice	Immediate	County Departments of Health
Review of health policies to make them more research orientated	Long-term	Ministry of Health
Motivation or incentives to County Health staff to pursue training in research related fields	Long-term	County Departments of Health
Establish research units at Level 5 hospitals	Long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National government/ Ministry of Health • County Departments of Health
Provision/ sourcing of resources to support implementation	Long-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National government/ Ministry of Health • County Departments of Health • Implementation partners

Priority Recommendation 2. Development of standardized protocols and associated standard operating procedures (SOPs) for routine surveillance data access and sharing

Key activities	Timeline	Stakeholders
Map existing sources, SOPs, and gaps in routine data use	Immediate/ short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Judiciary • County health departments • Implementing partners/funders • Research organizations/Academia • Council of governors
Harmonize existing SOPs to enhance and diversify sharing potential among collaborators	Intermediate/ long-term	
Establish interoperability between data-sharing platforms and central systems such as Dharura	Intermediate/ long-term	
Demystify the Data Protection Act and disseminate it to the relevant audiences	Immediate/ short-term	
Develop innovative approaches to sharing of surveillance data and the relevant SOPs	Intermediate/ long-term	



Priority Recommendation 3. Digitization and integration of routine surveillance data

Key activities	Timeline	Stakeholders
<p>Create/ improve county health surveillance information systems including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with existing laws, e.g. the Data Protection Act, to support digitalization • Development of uniform standard operating procedures (SOPs) across all counties • Collection of standard minimum variables reportable across all counties to support generation of aggregate summaries that are usable by policymakers • Centralization of surveillance data at the focal point (counties) and remove fragmented entries into county health information system 	Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County political leadership • Health CECs at the counties • County Health Management Teams • MOH • Non-governmental organizations (external funders) • Health workers • Health records departments at the counties
Improve primary source data with robust quality checks at the source of data collection/ entry	Short-term	
Co-create digitalization process with the County Departments of Health being the focal point of coordination	Intermediate	
Mobilize funders, NGOs, and county financial investment to strengthen existing Health Information Records systems at each public facility in the counties including commitment of county financial investment through staffing, ICT infrastructure, and maintenance at facility level for sustainability	Intermediate	
Create a national aggregation point of all data by building interoperability between county health information surveillance systems and KHIS	Intermediate	
Automate KHIS system to allow end users to filter surveillance data by county for ease of use at county levels	Intermediate	
Automate the facility-based surveillance reporting system to ensure data is shared in real time for immediate intervention	Long-term	

Priority Recommendation 4. Development of pathways for communicating research findings and recommendations to end users

Key activities	Timeline	Stakeholders
<p>Co-develop communication strategies with county research committees, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive mapping of stakeholders specific to each research activity in collaboration with County Departments of Health • Clustering of audiences, e.g., health workers, religious leaders, county staff, general public • Development of specific communication strategies for each cluster of stakeholders, e.g., Policy Briefs for county assembly members, mass media and social media for the general public, CMEs for health workers, etc. 	Short/intermediate term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers • County Departments of Health • Health facilities • Implementation partners
Train researchers and county research committee members on communication strategies	Short/intermediate term	
Establish/ strengthen county research committees to optimize their role in communicating research findings and recommendations to end users	Long term	
Directly disseminate research findings/ recommendations to County Research Committees and County Departments of Health (e.g., County Health Management Teams)	Short term	
Engage county, sub-county and health facility staff at the outset of the research for ease of dissemination of findings/ recommendation and sense of ownership	Short term	
Establish new forums or leverage existing forums for dissemination of research findings, e.g., annual symposia, local administration meetings and county/ sub-county health management team meetings	Short term	
Ring-fence funding to support dissemination within research, County Department of Health, and health facility budgets	Long term	

Optimization of the KWTRP epidemiologic data dashboard

KWTRP have developed an [epidemiologic data dashboard](#) to enhance access of data to inform public health policy-/ decision-making. Workshop delegates were invited to provide input on approaches to optimize the dashboard. The following improvements were proposed:

- Expand the disease-specific data displayed. Specific examples of diseases/ conditions of interest suggested were HIV, malaria, TB, cholera, and maternal mortality.
- Collaborate with a wider range of Ministry of Health divisions in order to:
 - Expand the content displayed, e.g., integration of disease Situation Reports (SITREPs).
 - Create a sense of ownership across a wide range of stakeholders.
 - Meet the demand/ needs of stakeholders, particularly given the existence of many dashboards and the tendency of individuals to interact with those dashboards that meet their data needs.
- Cross-post the content on other sites to increase visibility.
- Refine the target audience. Various audiences were suggested, ranging from the general public to political leaders. At the same time, it was proposed to tailor the content displayed on the dashboard to the target audience.

Summary and call to action

Workshop delegates proposed concrete pathways towards strengthening the capacity of County Departments of Health to interpret and evaluate research findings, developing protocols to improve access to surveillance data, digitalization, and integration of surveillance data, as well as towards communicating research findings and recommendations to end users. The proposed activities can be used as a blueprint towards optimizing access to and use of data for public health planning and decision-making. We call on colleagues in Ministry of Health, County Departments of Health, academia/ research, and implementation partners to collaborate towards implementation of the proposed activities.



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