

A COMPREHENSIVE BASELINE AUDIT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEM

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Background:

The lack of a national policy or guideline for human resources for Health Information System (HIS) together with a lack of standardisation of the software and hardware necessary for processing data are thought to contribute to the poor quality of information emanating from the HIS and the subsequent lack of use of this data in planning and managing health service delivery.

Objective:

To conduct a situation analysis of the HIS on a national level, looking at human resource issues and computer (hardware and software) capability available to HIS staff members in light of the requirements for using the District Health Information System version 1.4 software (DHIS 1.4).

Method:

A comprehensive audit was conducted in which 677 staff members doing HIS work were interviewed telephonically.

Results:

Thirty five percent of the HIS staff were not in official permanent HIS posts. A third of the HIS staff members had been in their posts for less than a year and 17% for less than six months.

Thirty five percent of the HIS staff members had received no training in the DHIS software. Twenty five HIS staff members did not have access to computers and many of the computers used by HIS staff members needed upgrading.

Forty two percent of the HIS staff members spent less than 80% of their time on HIS work.

Conclusion:

The National Department of Health needs to develop a policy document on human resource requirements for an effective HIS workforce. Issues which would need to be addressed would include:

- The ideal number of HIS staff members required at the different levels of the health information system, with the post levels and criteria required for these different levels;
- The length of training necessary;
- Target dates (agreed to by provinces) by which provinces need to stabilise their HIS workforce;
- A basic job description for HIS staff members.

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