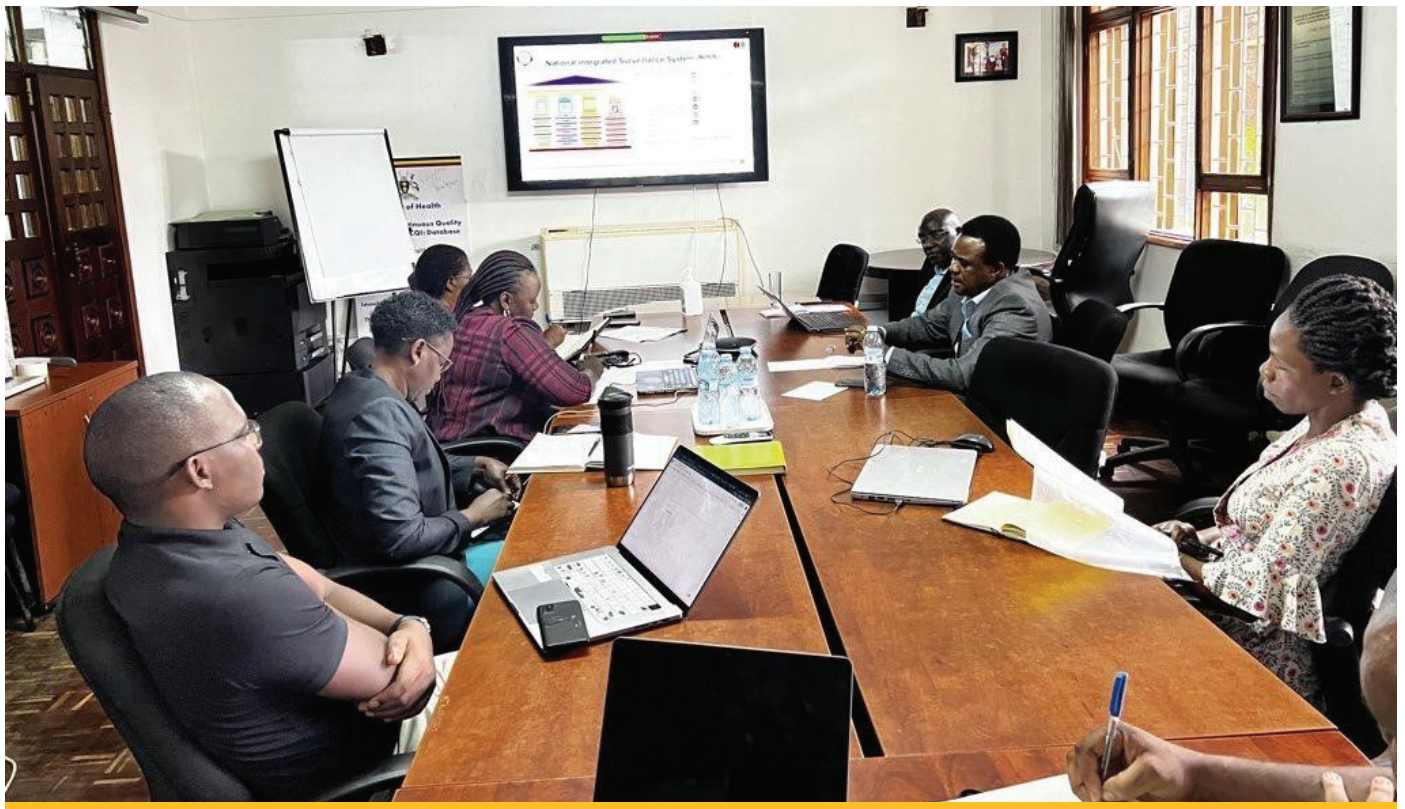


OCTOBER 2023

METS WATCH

Strategies for Enhanced Disease Surveillance and Public Health Response in Uganda



Dr. Muruta (2nd Right) meeting the team at the METS offices

The Department of Integrated Epidemiology Surveillance & Public Health Emergencies (IES&PHE) at the Ministry of Health is mandated to spearhead the implementation of disease surveillance and respond to outbreaks and public health emergencies. This department is

headed by Commissioner Allan Muruta (Dr) who provides oversight, coordination, and leadership. In this role, he paid a visit to the METS Program on 5th October 2023 to acquaint himself with the various surveillance activities supported by METS. In attendance were representatives from US Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Makerere University School of Public Health. During his visit the METS team debriefed him on activities that the program supports which included disease surveillance at the levels of population, key populations, mortality, and TB. Also included



Hosts take a photo opportunity with Commissioner Muruta

was an update on achievements made on the National Integrated Surveillance System, the Public Health Response and development of health information systems that support surveillance activities.

In response to the debrief, Commissioner Muruta emphasized the need to build the capacity of districts and regions to conduct surveillance activities by training the relevant staff and establishing surveillance focal points at health facility levels. Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of linking laboratory data to the District Health Information System (DHIS2) and ensuring that different systems are interoperable. He pledged his support to having the HIV and TB Case Based Surveillance (CBS) guidelines approved and noted that this was a critical document to guide disease surveillance.

Dr. Muruta's insights shed light on strategies for the public health response in Uganda, the need for improved internet access and enhanced data integration for an effective and responsive healthcare system. In conclusion, the team promised to provide regular updates to the Commissioner and he in turn agreed to support initiatives that ensure disease surveillance is effectively and efficiently implemented in the country.

Improving quality of data for HIV testing services (HTS) through regular assessments



An assessment team conducting a joint count

In the quest to achieve the 95-95-95 targets for HIV epidemic control by 2030, ensuring availability of high quality data is essential. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has been conducting

Data Quality Assessments and Improvement (DQAI) activities to inform program planning, monitoring, and performance management. In September this year, the HTS inter was conducted

in 16 regions, 81 districts, and 111 health facilities in partnership with 26 Implementing partners. The exercise revealed valuable insights into the state of HTS data.

On a good note,

- Most of the health facilities have qualified staff that were dedicated to handling data on HIV testing services and are knowledgeable about the national guidelines..
- Some of the facilities employ computerized data systems such as UgandaEMR and DHIS2 to improve data quality
- Implementing Partners and District Biostatisticians review the data and provide immediate feedback on any quality issues.
- There is evidence of data quality controls, including validation rules and checks.
- Some facilities conduct regular on-site data reviews and performance meetings.
- The HTS data is used regularly for analyzing performance against targets and informing decision-making.
- Most facilities reported increased availability of HTS data collection tools.

Despite these positive findings, the HTS DQA also uncovered challenges that affect data quality:

1. A lot of the HTS data was awaiting entry into the electronic systems, which delays timely use of data.
2. Some of the facilities exhibited poor adherence to the MoH HTS Circular.
3. There was inadequate storage space for HTS tools, especially HTS cards.
4. Many HTS cards were incomplete, and especially lacking crucial information.
5. There were challenges in aligning HTS entry points in HMIS/DHIS2 with PEPFAR HTS modalities.
6. Instances of double counting in HTS entry points were noted.
7. There were some discrepancies in HTS data from the various data sources compared to the gold standard (HTS Register).

To address these gaps, key recommendations include the following:

1. Scale-Up use of electronic Medical Records to provide real-time updates.
2. Institutionalize Continuous Medical Education (CME) and Quality Improvement (QI) projects to enhance data quality.
3. Monitor adherence to MoH HTS data tools and circulars across all HTS entry points.
4. Review HMIS tools to align HTS entry points with PEPFAR HTS modalities.
5. Conduct on-site staff orientation to map HTS entry points onto PEPFAR HTS modalities.
6. Conduct routine data harmonization meetings to address mismatches in various HTS data sources before final reporting.

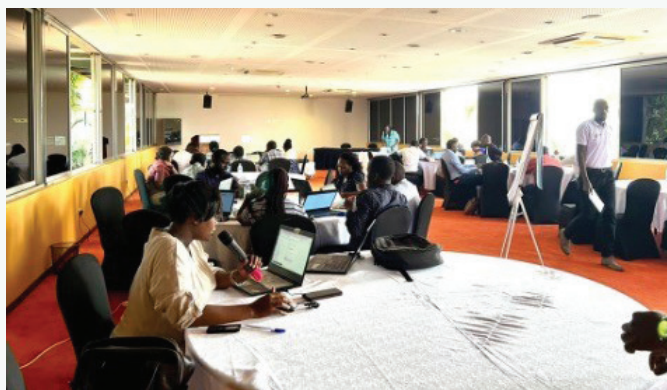
The HTS DQA has been a pivotal learning experience, highlighting the importance of routine data assessments. It has improved data management, infrastructure, and understanding of indicators. Specific staff assignment at each HTS entry point has proven effective, and use of the UgandaEMR system for reporting has yielded positive results. Regular data reviews have been instrumental in ensuring data accuracy and completeness.

In Uganda's journey towards ending HIV transmission, data quality remains a cornerstone, and the HTS DQA is a significant step towards achieving that goal. Continuous efforts to improve data quality will play a vital role in reaching the 95-95-95 targets and securing a healthier future for all Ugandans.

Shaping Uganda's Healthcare Data Landscape



Partners reviewing the Uganda Data Sharing, Access and Use Guidelines at Kabira Country Club



Feedback session for the HDPC guidelines review, October 2023



Solomon Muhumuza, MoH-DHI taking questions during the guidelines review workshop



Partners adding sections within the HDPC guidelines

METS has maintained a strong collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) providing invaluable technical support in developing various strategic guidelines for the country. These guidelines include the Uganda Health Information Exchange and Interoperability (HIE) Guidelines, the Uganda Health Data Protection and Confidentiality (HDPC) Guidelines, and the Uganda Health Data Sharing, Access, and Use Guidelines.

In October 2023, METS played a

pivotal role in assisting the MoH to conclude the review process and developed presentation materials for the HIE guidelines, HDPC guidelines, and Data Sharing, Access, and Use guidelines.

The meeting took place at Kabira Country Club, in attendance were participants Ministry of Health (MOH), CDC Uganda, MaKSPH METS program, USAID SITES, Infectious Diseases Institute (IDI), BRAC, Living Goods, Medic International, NITA Uganda, Ministry of ICT, the Uganda

Data Protection Office, among others.

As of now, the HIE guidelines and HDPC guidelines have received the endorsement of the Health Information, Innovation and Research (HIIRE) Technical Working Group (TWG) and are now in the queue for presentation to the senior management team at the MoH for final approval. Once approved, the guidelines will be officially launched and disseminated into the health sector.

Empowering Health Professionals: PrEP Training in Hoima District

Data quality for key populations plays a pivotal role in the efforts to reduce HIV transmission. Poor data quality directly affects patient care, research quality, and the effectiveness of public health surveillance. To derive meaningful insights from available data and, in turn, make well-informed decisions, data cleanliness and accuracy are paramount.

MakSPH-METS has taken a proactive stance in supporting Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) for key populations through the development, management, and conducting trainings on the use of the PrEP tracker system across various agencies. The PrEP tracker is an online data management system that tracks HIV prevention services provided to key and priority populations.

In the week of 18th - 22nd September 2023, METS conducted a 5-day training on the KP/PrEP Tracker system in Hoima district. The main objective of training was to strengthen the MoH's capacity in data entry, analysis, and reporting of key population data in the tracker. Beneficiaries included district-based Ministry of Health (MoH) staff, regional referral hospital biostatisticians, and a team from the AIDS Control Program (ACP).

The training covered various aspects of the PrEP tracker system, including its features and seamless integration into the healthcare



Winnie Mbabazi going through the PrEP registration process

workflow, reviewed the revised PrEP tools utilized for client management, and data entry and management in the tracker.

Moving forward, facility staff will be able to enter data on PrEP services into the system in a timely manner, analyze the data, and use it for program improvement.



Winnie Mbabazi going through the PrEP registration process

Gallery



HTS DQA

Jennifer Balaba (Black&White dress-left) and Herbert Mulira (Purple shirt-right) take their respective facility teams through feedback sessions during the DQAs at Kayunga RRH and MasakaRRH. DQAI activities were intended to inform program planning, monitoring, and performance management. The feedback allowed for sharing findings and development of action plans for recommendations.



Innocent Musoke (checked shirt) during a feedback session at Taqwa HC III in Wakiso district. This was during the interagency cervical cancer on-site mentorships aimed at improving the quality of service delivery and data management conducted in 100 health facilities. The mentorships were aimed at ensuring compliance to quality standards as recommended by Ministry of Health; to identify site capacity and technical challenges and further reinforce support.





Jennifer Balaba & Aussie Kalega orient in KP tracker at the Trust AIC Foundation team in Soroti



TDY from CDC headquarters visited METS on 23/10/23 to acquire better understanding of the PrEP program implementation, get insights for best practices in monitoring and evaluating as well as share recommendations for improvement of the program.



Isaac Sebuliba provides guidance on the DREAMS COP23 priorities for IDI Masaka and Wakiso Regions during the M&E orientation meetings for the new implementing Partners.





Team Uganda at the planning meeting for Cross Border Data Sharing held on 26th October at Breeze Hotel, Busia. Sharing health info between countries is essential for ensuring service continuity & enhancing disease surveillance. Assistant Commissioner at the Ministry of Health - Division for Health Information, Paul Mbaka closed the two day workshop (bottom)



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