CIO

E A S T   A F R I C A

Business Continuity
DISASTER RECOVERY

It is elemental to note that business continuity and disaster recovery continues to mature rapidly despite its limited history. But for it to be successful in the future it must gather its various elements into a cohesive holistic approach, and must work effectively with other related disciplines, so as to earn respect and acceptance from business leadership

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Trendlines

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E-learning, transforming the health sector

Health Workers, engaged in an e-health session

Lorna (not her real name) is a nurse. Today, she received her membership card from the body that regulates nursing in her country. Over the last one year, she has attended various professional development courses recommended by her employer for which she has received accreditation points. She did not set foot in a classroom. Her local training college offers e-Learning courses that she takes from the comfort of her home or health facility using a personal tablet PC that she acquired through financing from a bank. The nursing council, which is the regulator of the sector, has all her career related information in databases from the day she began her journey in nursing over 30 years ago.

Just 5 years ago, Lorna used to attend to over 50 patients in some days. Today, Lorna has several nurse assistants whom she manages. The patient to nurse ratio has dropped steadily over the last 5 years, below the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended ratio of 143 to 100,000. This trend is reflected in many other cadres in the health sector as reflected in the improved forecasting of health worker requirements by the health ministries.

Lorna lives and works in a remote village in rural Kenya. This is the vision of the USAID funded FUNZOKenya project. The project was initiated to ensure that Kenya has adequate health workers with updated skills and knowledge. Together with the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation and the Ministry of Medical Services, the project aims to achieve the desired goal through increasing the training of new health workers, addressing current training needs and supporting the training facilities to offer high quality training and adoption of new training methodologies that will help them reach a wider audience.

For Kenya, to ensure adequate supply of health workers, the training institutions must be responsive to the trends in the health sector. Professional and regulatory bodies also face challenges in coordinating activities of their members and in some cases, they cannot track their members training or gauge the quality of training offered to them by the accredited training institutions.

The FUNZOKenya will leverage on technology to address these challenges. The project will utilize the IntraHealth Human Resource Information System (iHRIS).

The iHRIS Suite supplies health sector leaders and managers with the information they need to assess health workforce problems, plan effective interventions, and evaluate those interventions. The suite has several modules like the iHRIS Plan; a workforce planning and modeling solution. It enables decision makers to assess their workforce needs for the next several years, project the expected health workforce over the same time, and make effective policy decisions to close the gap between the two.

iHRIS Manage, another module, is a human resources management tool that enables an organization to design and manage a comprehensive human resources strategy. iHRIS Manage is already in place at the Health Ministries. It tracks detailed information about health workers throughout their employment, including where they are deployed, salary history, promotions and transfers, qualifications, in-service training courses, and reasons for attrition. iHRIS Manage also tracks open positions and applicants.

The iHRIS Qualify module enables a licensing or certification authority to track complete data on a health worker cadre, such as nurses or physicians, from pre-service training through attrition. It captures information about health professionals in that cadre from the time they enter pre-service training through registration, certification, continuing education credits or licensure and migration. With the system in place, the Government will have access to information on the health workforce at their fingertips.

The project will also work with training institutions to introduce novel training approaches such as 'e' and 'm' learning. The new modes of learning can train more health workers at a fraction of the cost of traditional face to face learning. For example, the induction of new government health workers using e-Learning has already seen training induction costs drop by over 50%. Health workers' do not need to attend class physically, to learn. This is expensive, disrupts health service delivery and excludes those in remote and far to reach areas. E learning offers flexibility to learning anytime, anywhere. The project will establish partnerships with relevant public and private ICT organizations to achieve the set goal.

A healthy workforce is key for both economic growth and development. Adequate health workers with updated skills and knowledge will play a major role in ensuring Kenya achieves Vision 2030. E-health is on the rise in Kenya with the availability of faster Internet and mobile phones in the country. It enables sharing of knowledge and experiences by health care workforce and a healthier population, gradually.