

EDITORIAL**Investing on strengthening health data management for better health service and outcome in Africa****Daniel Yilma, MD, PhD, Professor of Internal Medicine, Editor-EJHS**Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ejhs.v34i6.1>

Strong routine health data management system is a foundation for evidence decision making in health. Quality routine health data helps to monitor health system performance, improve health service utilization, expedite patient management, and facilitates proper resource planning and management at national and regional level. Countries in Africa are currently using several data management systems, technologies and platforms for data collection, storage, analysis, and use (1). The use of digital health data management system has increased in the last decades in Africa (2). However, most countries are not using single data management system. Different platforms that have poor linkage for integration are being used for data collection with some being programme specific. Such fragmented approach of data collection and reporting is inefficient as it leads to duplication of efforts, waste of resources, and increasing risk of errors. This potentially can have an impact on the health data interpretation and recommendation. The use of different data management system by each country in Africa have also been a challenge as it limits data integration and interoperability at regional level.

Establishing and implementing a single or interoperable data management system in Africa is needed to capture a robust health data and bring system wide impact. This requires a higher commitment and investment. Most health investments in Africa are vertical, partner-driven and program-specific (2). It is important national health programmes work with partners and stakeholders in strengthening a single data management system or design a data management system that can be easily linked with existing single national data management system if specific need arises for specific programme.

To strengthen the data management system in the continent, investment on

establishment of an innovative and contextualized interoperable data management system, building personnel capacity, and developing a robust governance structure and standard for regulating data availability, usability, integrity, and security is needed. There has been an effort to harmonize electronic health data management platforms since 2010 in Africa (3). Recently, Africa CDC is promoting and working on health information exchange policy and standards development (4). World Health Organization is also working to establish a fully operational regional health data hub by 2030 for integrating country and regional health data in the African region (1). These initiatives require higher investment and countries and all stakeholders need to support and follow these initiatives to come into action and properly implemented as it improves health services and outcomes in Africa.

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