Better data for sustainable planning in Kisumu
An assessment and inventory of data collection and quality control in Kisumu County, Kenya

The challenge

Under Kenya’s devolved system of governance, newly established county governments are responsible for providing accessible and high-quality services across a range of sectors. Local, disaggregated population and sectoral data are essential for county authorities to plan sustainably and to address the specific needs of their populations.

The National Statistical System of Kenya is responsible for collecting and providing demographic and sectoral data as a baseline for policy planning, but cannot yet collect and manage regular and standardised data at all levels. This makes it difficult to identify marginalised target groups and to measure the quality of public service delivery.

At county level data collection, quality control, management and analysis are spread across various ministries, sectors and institutions. In order to fulfil their responsibilities, county governments require an overview of existing structures, as well as a better understanding of how to improve data management for sustainable planning.

Our approach

On behalf of Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Support to the Health Sector programme (HSP) and Energising Development (EnDEV) project advise partner institutions in Kisumu County on the extension and improvement of health and energy services respectively. In June 2016, with support from the Sector Initiative Population Dynamics, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, they undertook an inventory and assessment of data collection, management and use in Kisumu County.

For the assessment and inventory, relevant ministry representatives, planning staff, county health records officers, civil registrars, researchers, representatives of civil society organisations and development partners were interviewed. In addition, observational visits were made to sub-county administrations, health centers and energy selling points, and a comprehensive review of routine data sources (e.g. Kenyan civil registration and vital statistics system) and existing literature was conducted.

The assessment and inventory offered information about the legislative framework and mechanisms for data management at county level, an overview of various stakeholders’ use of available data, and recommendations for improving data management in the two sectors.

It found that a comprehensive county-level legal framework for data management was still lacking and that the statistical responsibilities devolved to county level had not yet been fully operationalised. Existing policies, such as the Health Information Policy, did not yet reflect the changes in the devolved system of government.

The assessment revealed that robust mechanisms for the delivery of administrative data from the health facilities to the national level were in place and that there was...
widespread access to the District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2), a software platform for data collection, management and analysis of routine health information. However, the data analysis potentials of DHIS2 were not fully used, especially at county level and below, with analysis generally limited to the national requirements of performance measurement. Even before 2016, the health authorities in Kisumu had begun publishing a quarterly health bulletin summarising the state of health in the county. The county government realised that far greater disaggregation of data would be needed to adjust policies, for example disaggregation by age.

The energy sector, which was less devolved than the health sector, had less robust data collection and management systems. Having no history of routine data collection on energy issues, the county conducted a survey to establish a reliable baseline upon which to begin its energy policy planning. It had to decide which data it would need to collect in the future. Commercial energy holdings collect household data to map the regions they serve, providing a possible source of data on energy needs at the local level. Based on these observations, the assessment provided a series of recommendations, among them:

- Developing and/or adjusting the legal and policy framework at county level to strengthen the collection and analysis of statistics at county level and coordinate the production and use of statistics across sectors;
- Addressing understaffing in health facilities and county planning units to improve data collection, analysis and use;
- Producing county and sub-county reports using DHIS2 data to improve the visibility, understanding and use of data down to the health facility level; and
- Building capacities for new trends in data collection and analysis, as well as data dissemination and presentation in line with the SDGs.

At a workshop, stakeholders and partners discussed possible next steps. They highlighted the important role of Health Records and Information Officers and community health volunteers, who are few and receive low pay, which puts their work at risk. Many local health personnel prioritise other urgent tasks over correct and comprehensive documentation. More analysis and dissemination of data will help to raise awareness of its importance, e.g. in the case of institutionalised maternal death review to identify avoidable pitfalls along the continuum of care.

Results

The assessment came at an opportune time in terms of countrywide efforts to improve statistics. The Kenya Health Data Collaborative (KHDC), an international initiative to improve and harmonise health data, was launched in 2016. County health governments, particularly Kisumu, took the lead in the initiative, together with the Ministry of Health, making clear that collection of good quality local data forms the cornerstone of valid and usable data at regional and national level. The findings of the assessment were useful for the operationalisation of KHDC objectives in Kisumu. They also provided insights into gaps in maternal death reporting and the identification of prevention measures.

The Department of Energy has developed an Energy Master Plan for the county. Given the need for regular, good quality local data to monitor this plan and others across government, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics is developing a county statistical abstract for Kisumu, which will join performance and planning with population data. The inventory summarised available data sources and actors engaged in the field of statistics and, together with the assessment and recommendations, raised awareness among ministry representatives of the multitude of stakeholders involved in data management, quality control and use.