Bridging the gap from Knowledge to Action: Implementation of the Data to Policy (D2P) training program at sub-national levels in Zambia

Kutha Banda¹ Rabson Zimba¹ Olatubosun Akinola¹

¹Clinton Health Access Initiative, Lusaka, Zambia

The Global Health Network

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Knowledge Translation (KT) is “the synthesis, exchange, and application of knowledge by relevant stakeholders to accelerate the benefits of global and local innovation in strengthening health systems and improving people’s health”. This entails the scientific process of promoting the uptake of knowledge into practice or strategies used to bridge the gap between research and practice. Identifying the best way to translate research evidence into routine policy and practice remains an enduring challenge in health systems across the globe and to improve this in Zambia, the National Health Research Authority (NHRA) has been conducting a training program at national level called the Data to Policy (D2P) training with officers in the health sector at the national level.

The D2P program is a capacity building program meant to equip health professionals with the skills to develop evidence-based policy brief. The program utilizes evidence from research and existing public health data to package and formulate policy options for policy recommendation and decision making. It combines epidemiology with economic analysis and modelling to be able to develop informatic, policy and technical briefs. Several policy briefs have been developed over the years and these have informed decisions on different programs including interventions on the People at the Centre (PeaCe) health program being implemented by the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) with funding from the embassy of Sweden in Zambia.

To promote evidence-based decision making, CHAI collaborated with the NHRA to develop a D2P curriculum to be used at sub-national levels to inform not only policy but practice that address identified local priority problems. The program includes 16 modules delivered during the interactive training workshops with the facilitators and weekly sessions with the mentors. Additionally, stakeholders are engaged throughout the process of developing the policy briefs and a policy forum held with policy makers at the end of the course to decide on the proposed options. The 2022 cohort includes MoH managers and officers at provincial, district and hospital levels who are developing six policy briefs using routine data from DHIS2, program and financial data as well as research evidence.