Data Use Acceleration and Learning (DUAL)

Overview

The Data Use Acceleration and Learning (DUAL) initiative is a partnership between PATH and Cooper/Smith that aims to share what works to achieve digital transformation. DUAL is amplifying learnings from five focal countries—Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, South Africa, and Tanzania—that have been digitalizing their health systems and strengthening the use of health data to achieve better health outcomes. DUAL packaged these countries' experiences into a model that distills their learnings into practical, measurable recommendations for digital transformation, representing a comprehensive approach to transforming a country's health data systems and digital tools.

The model's ten essential elements of sustainable digital transformation for data use (see figure 1) can be applied by countries at any stage in their process to accelerate data use. The model's elements are highly interrelated and are intended to be addressed together. The DUAL model supports a range of digital health stakeholders—country governments; global and regional policymakers; implementers, including the private sector; and funders operating at a regional or global scale— collaborating with countries to help digitalize their health systems in alignment with their health targets and digital maturity.

Figure 1: The DUAL model for data use acceleration

How country governments can use the DUAL model

Country governments can apply the DUAL model to digital transformation for data use efforts to align digital health initiatives and integrate the model's key factors within national strategies. Key actors include ministries of health and other government agencies responsible for digital health, as well as information and communication technology. They work across departments and ministries to implement digital health programming and execute strategies and policies. The DUAL model aims to support countries whether they are just beginning to define their vision for digital health or have several digital systems already deployed.

Recommended actions for country governments

❖ Establish governance bodies to oversee and enforce digital health policies, guidelines, and standards.

❖ Develop investment roadmaps to accurately budget and scope a national digital transformation for data use strategy.

❖ Support existing technical working groups and committees in applying and institutionalizing digital health guidelines, systems, and tools that advance digital transformation.

❖ Develop an enterprise architecture to define the current and future state of the national digital health system.

❖ Increase coordination between sectors and regional, subnational, and national digital transformation efforts.

❖ Use data, assessments, and evaluations to make digital transformation investment and programmatic decisions.

❖ Build multiuse digital health systems and tools that can be applied across different scenarios, uses, and landscapes (as appropriate), rather than rebuilding applications for every new environment.

❖ Design digital and data tools that are responsive to infrastructure challenges and limitations.

❖ Cultivate champions at all levels of the government and within other relevant sectors to advocate for digital transformation for data use.

❖ Motivate and empower health workers to use and act on data, rather than just serving as data collectors.

❖ Identify and build the capacity of health actors at all tiers of the health system to model and cultivate a culture of data use.

❖ Develop long-term, country-generated funding streams to finance the real and ongoing costs of digital and data infrastructure.

Examples of actions being taken by country governments

Data Use Ecosystem

Creating space for digital collaboration and oversight
In Tanzania, the government will soon launch the Center of Digital Health, which will support and oversee all digital health initiatives in the country. It offers a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of digital policies and standards across the health sector, and it will seek to make future partnerships and digital systems more coordinated.

Systems Architecture

Aligning national policies to local contexts
In Malawi, the Ministry of Health worked with implementors to ensure national standards being developed for digital health and data systems aligned to the requirements of existing tools in districts throughout the country. This enabled a more efficient systems architecture and created local ownership of the digital tools.

Workforce

Providing mentorship opportunities
In Ethiopia, the government launched a Capacity Building and Mentorship Program in partnership with six universities, regional health bureaus, and other partners. The program is designed to advance health worker and manager skills on an ongoing basis using new training manuals, technology courses, and other activities.

For more information, contact: dual@path.org.
Visit the DUAL website: https://www.accelerateddatause.org.