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 to use the DUAL model

Successful efforts to advance data use depend not just on putting tools and systems in place within the health sector but also on improving areas that affect and are affected by these technologies, such as governance, policies, infrastructure, and capacity building for the health workforce. The DUAL model is not intended to be a step-by-step procedure for how to "do" digital transformation but rather presents all of the necessary "ingredients" of digital transformation success. The model supports countries with taking a holistic view of digital transformation and considering all of these elements in their plans.

Recommended actions to advance digital transformation efforts

This list represents a sample of suggested action for four key stakeholder groups: country governments, implementers, funders, and global and regional policymakers.

- ❖ **To engage stakeholders and improve leadership:**
  - o country governments can form technical working groups across sectors; and
  - o they can cultivate digital health champions at all levels of the health system.
- ❖ **To cultivate a culture of data use throughout the health system:**
  - o country governments and implementers can build the capacity of all health workers through training, professional development, mentoring, and other proven practices; and
  - o they can motivate and empower health workers to use and act on data, rather than just serve as data collectors.
- ❖ **To strengthen governance structures:**
  - o country governments can establish governance bodies to establish, manage, and enforce digital health policies, guidelines, and standards; and
  - o implementers can ensure that digital health activities are government driven and work within existing structures (such as technical working groups, steering committees, etc.).
- ❖ **To increase evidence-based planning:**
  - o policymakers can use evidence to inform new and revised policies and guidance for digital health and data use; and
  - o funders can leverage data, assessments, and system evaluations to inform investment decisions.
- ❖ **To improve the design of health systems:**
  - o country governments can advocate for building systems and tools that are responsive to infrastructure limitations and challenges;
  - o implementers can apply human-centered design approaches and build multiuse systems rather than designing separate systems for each use case; and
  - o funders can invest in global goods, standards, and interoperable systems instead of standalone systems.
- ❖ **To align and sustain funding efforts:**
  - o country governments can develop investment roadmaps and long-term funding streams;
  - o funders can ensure investments are country-led and align with countries' visions, priorities, and strategies; and
  - o funders can identify the true costs of digital and data infrastructure to help determine sustainable funding streams

Call to action for all stakeholders

Implementing digital health tools and information systems can improve health service delivery, but not if done without considering the broader goals, vision, and data ecosystem of the country's health system. The DUAL model for digitally transforming health systems to advance data use is based on countries' actual experiences and emphasizes a holistic approach that considers not only tools, systems, and infrastructure but also strengthening governance, building the capacity of the health workforce, and cultivating a culture of data use throughout the health sector. We envision a future in which all stakeholders in digital health, both globally and nationally, work together to advance and accelerate digital transformation in alignment with current best practices and each country's health goals and digital maturity.

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