

# Cameroon

## PARTNERS

- Ministry of Public Health (Ministère de la Santé Publique)

## THE CONTEXT

Realizing the need to leverage new technologies to facilitate health systems planning and decision-making, Cameroon has developed a National Digital Health Strategic Plan, 2020–2024. Vital Strategies' Data Impact Program has been working with our partners in Cameroon since 2020 to expand the use of available data into actionable evidence to support disease surveillance and public health policymaking.

## THE APPROACH

Vital Strategies' Data Impact Program partners with governments to use data to improve public health by prioritizing health issues and identifying populations in need, allocating financial and human resources, enacting laws and regulations, and establishing programs and services. The program provides technical assistance in three categories:



### Processes

Strengthening procedures, policies and systems for evidence use



### Products

Producing analytic insights and compelling reporting of health data



### People

Developing and reinforcing human capacity

## Main Achievement 1

### Improving surveillance during the COVID-19 pandemic:

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic the Data Impact team worked with the Ministry to develop a COVID-19 reporting system within the country's existing health information system (DHIS2). The team worked with regional and district monitoring and evaluation teams to improve the completeness of COVID-19 data from 50% to 95% in the Centre and Littoral regions. These regions were targeted because they represented almost 75% of all national COVID-19 cases. As a result of the project, the districts efficiently managed COVID-19 surveillance at the local level.

The Data Impact team also worked with the Ministry to develop a system for monitoring and visualizing the effects of the pandemic on the provision of essential noncommunicable disease (NCD) health services. Results showed that 35% of health facilities surveyed reported decreased attendance, 32% reported lower adherence to appointments, and 19% reported lower adherence to treatments. The ministry institutionalized this report by

creating a monthly situation report on NCDs, which is used to inform decision-makers of the status of essential services and areas adversely affected by the pandemic.

## Main Achievement 2

### Producing and disseminating analytic reports on health status to inform public health decision-making

Health monitoring is conducted by various groups such as people from communities and hospitals within the public and private sectors. The Data Impact team worked with partners, such as the National Health Observatory, to implement new health monitoring procedures and create strategies for data dissemination. Public health ministry personnel and staff from associated departments were trained to produce and use health monitoring bulletins to strengthen planning and decision-making. The development of a guide and template for health bulletins ensured that the production of the bulletins was institutionalized. Data Impact will continue to support the regular development of the health monitoring bulletins.

In 2019, the government, in collaboration with the WHO, developed and published an [analytical report](#) on 100 key health indicators linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. The Data Impact team worked with the Ministry of Public Health, National Health Observatory and WHO to update this publication with the most recent data to monitor progress and inform national health planning. A key aspect of the update is to include gender in the analysis to ensure data disaggregation.

### **Main Achievement 3**

**Establishing new collaborations and systems to improve cancer surveillance:** Data Impact and the [Cancer Registry Program](#) worked with local stakeholders involved in cancer management (cancer society, health facilities, civil society), the African Cancer Network and representatives from the Cancer Registry Program in Rwanda to establish a cancer surveillance system within DHIS2. Following capacity strengthening workshops, laboratory data managers from the eight largest cancer centers in Cameroon began to enter cytopathology and hemato-oncology diagnosis data using a standardized data collection form. A dashboard was also designed within DHIS2 to display the available cancer data. The plan is to enter retrospective data for the past five years and then start adding prospective data which will be used to provide a national portrait of laboratory diagnosed cancers in Cameroon.

### **Ongoing Work**

#### **Improving the provision of reproductive health services for adolescents and youth in Cameroon**

This is a pilot in five of Cameroon's ten regions that involve the creation of units within district hospitals that are dedicated to adolescent reproductive health services. Data from units that are functional are being collected, analyzed and will be presented with the goal of advocating for the scaling-up of adolescent reproductive health units in health facilities in Cameroon.

#### **Advocacy for improved maternal, child and newborn health care services through the Data to Policy (D2P) Training Program**

The D2P training program is aimed at strengthening organizational capacity for policy analysis. The curriculum comprises of three units (problem and policy analysis, economic evaluation of policy, and policy advocacy and communication). During the training, participants will turn available data into actionable evidence to address several policy topics including "low use of maternal, child and newborn healthcare services in health facilities". After participating in the D2P program, participants will be able to use data and evidence to analyze the issue of low use of maternal, child and newborn health care services at health facilities; identify policy options that address the root causes of the problem; use stakeholder analysis, health impact assessment and economic evaluation methods to assess the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of policy options; and persuasively communicate policy recommendations to stakeholders and decision-makers.

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### **About Data for Health**

The Data for Health Initiative is a global effort supported by [Bloomberg Philanthropies](#) with additional support from the [Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#). It provides technical assistance and grants to governments in low- and middle-income countries worldwide to improve public health data systems including civil registration and vital statistics systems; cancer registries; and data-driven policymaking and decision-making processes. [Vital Strategies](#) serves as an implementing partner.