Integrating Administrative Databases to Improve Resource Allocation in the Zambian Health Sector

An Application to the Spatial Distribution of Health Workers

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Health remains a major concern in Zambia

According to the Zambian Demographic and Health Survey 2013-2014:

• 1 in every 22 Zambian children dies before reaching age one, and 1 in every 13 does not survive to his or her fifth birthday

• 36% of deliveries are not performed by a skilled health care provider

• 24% of children in urban areas are not fully immunised and this number is 35% in rural areas
Making the most of the available resources

• Lack of health resources in Zambia
  • Shortage of health workers is a particular concern
  • 0.98 health workers per 1000 population while WHO recommends 4.45

• How can the available resources be used most effectively?
• Data can help allocate resources efficiently and support evidence-based policy-making
Data is available, but not integrated

The Ministry of Health (MoH) and its partners collect a wide variety on health services, for example:

• Health Management Information System (HMIS)
• Human Resource Information System (HRIS)
• MoH Health Facility Census
• EQUIP Health Facility Census

But these databases are not linked
This study

• Integrate the previously mentioned databases
• Demonstrate the power of the integrated data
• Provide two examples:
  1. Analysis of the spatial distribution of health workers
  2. Analysis of population access to laboratories
Database integration

• All datasets were merged together by facility name
• Match rates vary across datasets
  • 26% of all facilities in EQUIP are not in HRIS
  • 17% of HRIS facilities are not in EQUIP
• Reasons for unmatched facilities include:
  • Different target populations
    • For example, HRIS contains only facilities with MoH employees while EQUIP also contains private facilities
  • Time lag
    • EQUIP is from 11/2016-05/2017
    • HRIS is from 01/2018
  • Missing facilities, especially small health posts
The spatial distribution of medical staff

• Focus on health centres and health posts
• Define medical staff as nurses, midwives, clinical officers, environmental and community health workers, pharmaceutical staff, and doctors
  • Results are similar when different staffing definitions are considered
• Data:
  • Health facility staffing (HRIS)
  • Catchment populations (EQUIP)
  • Facility location (EQUIP)
• Data available for 1,420 facilities providing primary care for 14.3 million people
Distribution of population per medical staff

- On average there are 3,695 people per medical staff
- 10% of population live in areas with staffing ratios below 850 people per medical staff
- 10% of population live in areas with staffing ratios above 8,133 people per medical staff
Comparing relative staffing levels

• Imagine a rule-based allocation of staff: For no facility the ratio of population to medical staff should exceed $x$.  
• Compute the lowest achievable staffing threshold ($x$) given the current stock of health workers and population.  
  • This amounts to 2,054.  
• Use the number of staff implied by this rule as a benchmark to assess relative staffing at each facility.
Large local variation in staffing levels

• Differences between average relative staffing between districts are small compared to differences in relative staffing between facilities within the same district
• Based on this approach, nearly every district has facilities that are under- and over-staffed
Food for thought

• Should medical staff be re-allocated across facilities to reach a more equitable distribution?
• Would such a re-allocation improve aggregate health outcomes?
• What other factors should be considered in the staffing analysis?
• Why are some facilities understaffed while others are relatively well staffed?
Additional application: access to laboratories

• Compare access to laboratories across population
• Measure access to laboratories as the sum of
  • Travel time from place of residence to closest primary care facility
  • Travel time from this primary care facility to the nearest laboratory
• Data:
  • Location of laboratories (EQUIP)
  • Population distribution (WorldPop)
  • Travel time (Malaria Atlas Project)
Distribution of access to laboratories

- Approximately half of Zambians have an access time below 30 minutes
- For 10% of the population, this time is greater than 2.8 hours
Food for thought

• Where should the next laboratory be built?
• What other factors should be considered in this decision?
• What available data could provide information about those factors?
Further applications

There are many other potential applications for an integrated database, including:

• Location choice for the construction of new health facilities
• Monitoring spatial disease patterns and coordinating countermeasures
• Supply management
Conclusion

• A large amount of health data is collected at substantial expense
• Integrating existing datasets is comparatively cheap but benefits seem large
• An integrated data system facilitates:
  • Situational analysis
  • Identification of problems
  • Design of solutions
Roadmap towards an integrated data system

1. Identify key datasets to serve as the foundation of a comprehensive database
2. Introduce common facility identifiers across datasets and ensure completeness
3. Launch integrated data system
4. Expand data system to include additional information as needed
Appendix
## Match rates across datasets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference Dataset</th>
<th>Merged Dataset</th>
<th>EQUIP Census</th>
<th>MoH Census</th>
<th>HRIS*</th>
<th>HMIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EQUIP Census</td>
<td>2,650 (100%)</td>
<td>1,729 (65%)</td>
<td>2,010 (74%)</td>
<td>2,306 (87%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoH Census</td>
<td>1,729 (88%)</td>
<td>1,956 (100%)</td>
<td>1,501 (77%)</td>
<td>1,770 (90%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRIS*</td>
<td>2,010 (83%)</td>
<td>1,501 (64%)</td>
<td>2,329 (100%)</td>
<td>1,897 (82%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMIS</td>
<td>2,306 (93%)</td>
<td>1,770 (71%)</td>
<td>1,897 (76%)</td>
<td>2,483 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* HRIS excludes administrative offices and facilities without a meaningful name
Missing catchment population data

• Data on catchment population missing for 655 primary care facilities
• Estimate catchment population for these facilities by integrating additional publicly available data on population distribution
• Satellite-based high-resolution population population estimates from
  • WorldPop (100x100 m²)
  • The Gridded Population of the World (~900x900 m² at centre of Zambia)
• Assign grid cells to facilities by straight-line distance or travel time
  • Facility coordinates from EQUIP
Construction of catchment areas

Straight-line Distance

Travel Time
Estimated catchment populations