Brazil reports that the majority of the listed actions to promote an enabling environment for information and communication technologies (ICT) in the health sector have been taken and are rated from slightly to very effective. They will be reviewed and continued over the next two years. Noteworthy initiatives in this field include the Health Sector Fund, established by the Ministry of Science and Technology, and a project launched in 2005 to provide complementary health information (TISS). A collaboration between the government and the private sector, TISS creates structures for the exchange of information between various health sectors in Brazil. Among the most effective actions to build an enabling environment for the use of ICT in the health sector, includes the formulation of the national health information and informatics policy, which was drawn up by the Ministry of Health following the 12th National Conference on Health. Institutionalizing the health information policy is the main challenge Brazil faces in this area. Other successes include facilitating public access via the Internet to health information systems; the establishment of an Intergovernmental Agency for Health information (RIPSA) (involving academia, the government and international organizations). Social exclusion from computer technology, computer illiteracy, the administrative structures; institutional instability; lack of adequately trained staff; and scarce public and private funding opportunities pause significant challenges.

Brazil supports ICT infrastructure development for the health sector through intersectoral and nongovernmental cooperation. A national plan for the development of ICT in health, which sets targets for health sector connectivity, will be implemented over the next few years as will a national policy to reduce the costs of ICT infrastructure. One of the most effective actions thus far in building ICT infrastructure for the health sector has been the use of freeware for health applications that lowers costs and offers wider access to health information systems. Among the most significant challenges in this field are high costs (alterations to premises, connectivity, equipment, training and communication); the country’s size; and regional diversity (making adaptation of content difficult).

Since 1985, the development of electronic multicultural health content has been promoted in Brazil through the support of translation and cultural adaptation of existing high-quality content (created either locally or abroad). The most effective action in this area has been the Virtual Health Library, which encourages a multicultural approach to health through an electronic medium, thanks to cooperation between health reference centres throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.
All remaining listed eHealth services are rated from moderately to very useful.

Online access to health content has been provided to the general public and health-care professionals through national and international electronic journals, and a national open archive for scientific research. All of these actions are rated as extremely effective and will continue over the next few years. The most effective actions in this field are the Virtual Health Library project, which promotes the inter-institutional partnerships for the production of health information; Scielo, an electronic journals portal for comprehensive and unrestricted scientific content; Capes portal, which makes international journals available free of charge to all Brazil’s teaching institutions; and the health portal of the Ministry of Health. The most significant challenges to date are the lack of high-quality connectivity; shortage of computers in universities and research institutes; the high cost of subscriptions to journals; and a resistance to the computer culture and low computer literacy.

ICT capacity in Brazil has been built through the use of undergraduate/postgraduate training in ICT, continuing education in ICT, and eLearning in health sciences. These are rated from slightly to moderately effective and will be reviewed and continued over the next two years. The current reform of training curricula of health professionals to include ICT for health components has been very effective in this field. Various experiments with distance learning in the health sphere, at intermediate and higher levels, have also led to the successful expansion of ICT. However, the current infrastructure, a shortage of human resources to provide training in ICT for health and the lack of distance learning and ICT methodologies are all contributing factors to the challenge in building ICT capacity in the health sector.

The majority of the listed eHealth tools are rated as very useful if the World Health Organization could offer these as generic prototypes for adaptation. Brazil highlights its need for models for presenting health information. Advice on human resources development for eHealth is considered an extremely useful eHealth service. All remaining listed eHealth services are rated from moderately to very useful.

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