Uganda

Enabling environment – policies and strategies to support the information society

Uganda reports that all of the listed actions to promote an enabling environment for information and communication technologies (ICT) in the health sector have been taken, and are likely to be reviewed and continued over the next two years. The country has implemented an eGovernment strategy, which analyses various sectors from an ICT perspective. The most effective action is described as the adoption of ICT policies at the national level as well as within the health sector to ensure harmonization and coordination of initiatives for the use of ICT in health care delivery. Inadequate human and material resources, and slow administrative processes are reported as the most significant challenges.

Infrastructure – access to information and communication technologies

A national plan for the development of ICT in health, which sets targets for health sector connectivity, was implemented in 2005. A national policy to reduce the costs of ICT infrastructure for the health sector was implemented in 2002, and intersectoral and nongovernmental collaboration to promote infrastructure development in 2001. Both are rated as very effective. All these actions are likely to be reviewed and continued in the next two years. The Universal Access Fund is noted as an important initiative that provides increased rural connectivity through access facilities such as pay phones, telephone centres and Internet access points. The target is to have all health centres connected with reasonable (i.e. 128 kbps) bandwidth by 2010. Public-private partnerships are described as the most effective action to build a national infrastructure backbone.

Cultural and linguistic diversity, and cultural identity

Both listed actions to promote the development of electronic multicultural health content have been successfully implemented in Uganda and are likely to be reviewed and continued by 2008. Launched in 1988, the dissemination of health-related messages through drama groups (e.g. in the area of HIV/AIDS) has proven to be a very effective initiative. The multitude of languages in Uganda poses a challenge in this field. The government is addressing this by involving various stakeholders in the effort to translate health content into multiple languages.
Content – access to information and knowledge

Health professionals have access to online health content through international and national electronic journals. The former is rated as very effective, and the latter moderately so. Provision of locally created health information for the general public commenced in 1999 and is considered very effective. These actions are likely to be reviewed and continued. A decision remains to be made as to whether a digital national open archive for scientific research (published within the country) will be introduced by 2008. Uganda notes the production of electronic and print media as important initiatives in this area. The liberalization of the country’s radio air space is highlighted as the most effective action. Radio programmes have a great impact in the country because they reach a wide audience; the majority of households have a radio. The main challenges in this field include widespread low literacy levels, and a lack of culturally diverse programming (first and foremost provision of information in multiple languages). The contribution of key players in the development of health content is vital in addressing these challenges.

Capacity – human resources knowledge and skills

ICT skills courses as a part of university curricula for health sciences students have been offered since 1983 and ICT skills programmes in the ongoing training of health-care professionals since 1987. These programmes are rated as very and moderately effective, respectively, and are likely to be reviewed and continued. In 1995 Uganda introduced health sciences courses through eLearning for health professionals (in training and practice), an action considered moderately effective and expected to continue over the next two years. In-service training is considered very effective. This has greatly facilitated the transfer to ICT-based work skills and routines among health professionals.