Context

San Luis de Shuaro is a municipality in the Province of Chanchamayo, Junin. The majority of the population in the province lives in rural areas, with a high incidence of poverty.

In response to local health problems, the Municipal Council of San Luis de Shuaro approved the implementation of the Healthy Municipalities Strategy in 2004 as a means of promoting neighborhood involvement and shared civic responsibility in local development. To implement the strategy, a municipal ordinance created the District Technical Committee (COTEDI), chaired by the Mayor and including representatives from the ministries of interior, health, education, and justice; as well as representatives of the Catholic and Evangelical churches and social organizations from the municipality’s 9 annexes and 32 neighborhoods.

The COTEDI took on the challenge of implementing the Healthy Municipalities Strategy by proposing a local management monitoring mechanism to solve the problems of limited health management information available to the local government, deficiencies of the health information available in health facilities and education centers, organizational problems, and the lack of clarity in existing concepts and indicators for monitoring health conditions. In addition, the municipality lacked tools to process and report health information from a territorial perspective, and COTEDI did not possess the necessary competencies to process, analyze, and use such information for decisionmaking. The COTEDI, working with the primary healthcare network of the district of San Luis de Shuaro, identified a set of 14 public health management performance indicators that could be used to address child malnutrition and neonatal and maternal mortality in the district. In June 2008, these were approved by a City Hall Resolution.

Photo courtesy of Health Policy Initiative

Intervention

The Health Policy Initiative, together with COTEDI, designed a technical cooperation plan that included analyzing information needs, identifying data sources and methods of assessing data quality, reviewing and prioritizing health indicators, developing and validating a computer application, training on the interpretation and use of such information, incorporating the resulting data into COTEDI’s work, and communicating the results to the population in general.

Analysis of information needs

The Health Policy Initiative team supported the COTEDI technical team in the development of the 14 selected indicators by designing a technical specifications form that standardized the calculation procedure, the concept, and the interpretation of the values to be obtained.
Given the COTEDI’s need to incorporate the resulting data into its results-driven budget and strategic programs, the technical team made a decision to monitor kindergarten and primary school dropout rates, availability of safe water in homes, use of iron supplements by pregnant women, knowledge of contraceptive methods, number of pregnant women with access to prenatal care, and control of growth and development (CRED) in children under 36 months.

"Many thanks to the Health Policy Initiative for providing us support with its professionals who teach, guide, and advise us to make decisions according to the indicators we have. The Project’s contribution has been invaluable in that we can have real information that helps us understand the reality of our people, so we can know where to invest our efforts and resources."

Vilma Cabezas
Governor of San Luis de Shuaro

Review and approval of the indicators

Each indicator was analyzed for its potential relevance to local strategies for the improvement of health, education, sanitation, and other areas of concern. These strategies are aimed at improving the well-being of the population, especially in the areas of childhood malnutrition and maternal and neonatal mortality, and have been assigned resources within the results-driven budget. Based on this collaborative analysis, COTEDI approved the following 30 indicators: 11 on nutrition, 12 on maternal and neonatal health, 3 on learning achievements, 2 on the people's access to legal identification (National Identity Documents, or NIDs), one on comprehensive health insurance coverage, and one on neighborhood councils.

Standardized management of indicators

The team developed a technical specifications form for the indicators and adapted it to local realities. It included a simple structure covering the definition, relevance, and type of each indicator. Also included were required variables for calculating the indicator and identifying the data source, the methodology for obtaining the data, and the person responsible for the calculation. This form ensures that, despite changes of institutional officials and staff, local officials will be able to continue generating consistent data for calculating the indicators.

Improving competencies of the COTEDI and those responsible for the indicators

To improve their ability to use the indicators, the team instructed COTEDI members on definitions for the indicators, as well as their interpretation and use, based on the sociodemographic profile of the district, including population characteristics, access to health services, and housing infrastructure. The team then provided customized training for each person responsible for generating the data for the 30 indicators.

Achievements

- The COTEDI selected indicators to monitor the progress of priority multisectoral interventions in San Luis de Shuaro, including those involving childhood malnutrition, maternal-neonatal death, access to daily basic education, and possession of NIDs. These documents ensure that the children are recognized as citizens with rights to access to social services, including health services.

- The civil register's information flow improved, permitting district annexes and towns to process their own data instead of sending them directly to the provincial municipality.

- The use of a computer application for monitoring local development indicators was formalized through a public ordinance created by the municipality.

- Through the COTEDI, the organized community has easily measured and analyzed indicators for two quarters. From the data analysis of just one quarter, the local government and the COTEDI increased the acquisition of NIDs by 154 children under the age of 5.

The analysis of sociodemographic data has allowed the local government to use these data to better support its small public investment projects. By monitoring these indicators, the Chanchamayo Network realized that it was underestimating its target populations for one of its primary healthcare networks.
Lessons Learned

The work conducted in the local government, in health and education sectors, and with community organizations, facilitated the local management of sociodemographic and health management information.

The involvement of staff who recorded such information throughout the whole process has allowed them to understand the importance of their work in decisionmaking, thus enhancing the perceived value of their roles and increasing their self-esteem.

The use of color charts for monitoring the indicators has allowed for the easy communication of results to the target audience.

The dissemination and transparent discussion of monitoring has resulted in the strengthening of relations between leaders and those they lead. The fact of establishing a culture in which the responsible sectors disseminate information about results has enabled the community to identify from whom it should demand accountability.

The organized community’s involvement in the analysis of indicators encourages the development of initiatives, suggestions, and proposals for achieving the desired results. This allows them to take ownership of the problem and its solutions.

The organized community’s involvement in developing and presenting the indicators has created a greater balance in the technical weight that each of the sectors brings to the overall process, paving the way for a possible greater use of indicators prioritized by the community itself.

"Having direct information obtained by us, which in turn can be interpreted and then used for making decisions for the development of our community, was a wish long awaited by all the inhabitants of Shuaro. Now we can more accurately deal with the problems we have. This work will last a long time, meaning it will be sustainable, because the new methods will use first-hand information to continue the fight against poverty.”

Luis Meza Reyes
Mayor of San Luis de Shuaro

Figure. Percentage of children under 5 years of age who have their National Identity Document (NID)