

State will have health data resource centre soon

CHENNAI, IndiaOctober 18, 2010Tamil Nadu will soon have a centralised data resource centre to collect relevant data across all health departments.The Health Management Information System (HMIS), accessible across the various departments, will be able to function as a one-stop shop for all information on health in Tamil Nadu, and as such will be able to influence policy-making in the health sector, according to S. Vijayakumar, project director, Tamil Nadu Health Systems Project (TNHSP).

CHENNAI, IndiaOctober 18, 2010Tamil Nadu will soon have a centralised data resource centre to collect relevant data across all health departments.The Health Management Information System (HMIS), accessible across the various departments, will be able to function as a one-stop shop for all information on health in Tamil Nadu, and as such will be able to influence policy-making in the health sector, according to S. Vijayakumar, project director, Tamil Nadu Health Systems Project (TNHSP). Once it is through, it is likely to be the first such system in the country, Principal Secretary, Health, V.K. Subburaj told The Hindu. He added that two months down the line, the skeleton of the system should be in place. To be implemented as part of the TNHSP, in association with AIDS Prevention and Control Project and the State government, the health data centre would bring about the much-needed interlinking between various health verticals. "There are 18 different verticals in the health sector in Tamil Nadu, for instance – the Directorate of Public Health, Directorate of Medical Services, Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society, Blindness Control Society. Each department has its own reporting system and there is no interlinking between them, " explained P.K.Amarnath Babu, State co-ordinator, HMIS.

The new data resource centre will liaise with all these departments, identify the reporting structure, streamline it electronically, and thereby collect data from all these various sources. IT-related analytical tools will then be applied to churn out statistics and indicators that will be helpful in formulating or changing health policy."It will be useful to map development indicators of the State on a constant basis. We can also generate data to evaluate where Tamil Nadu is in terms of meeting the Millennium Development Goals, " Dr. Amarnath said. In addition, it will be useful to various departments, hospitals and PHCs purely as a measure of routine supervision and achievements in the short and long term. Aggregated data will be updated constantly. Individual patient data will not be available on a system, except in some cases such as maternal deaths, deaths due to infectious diseases will be recorded with contact details of patient's family. On the manpower front, details such as retirement dates of staff across various departments can be generated with a simple command. A private agency, CNSI, has been contracted to do a two-month study on the existing reporting structure and to understand the nature, value, and utility of information collected. By the end of November, the agency will hand over a blueprint for an operations manual, which will include a software requirement specification for developing the HMIS. Armed with that business and technical plan, another agency will be hired to write the actual information system. Already, 1, 500 primary health centres have started reporting entirely through the MIS, with the manual reporting system being phased out. The DMS will also start the process of digitising the reporting system soon. The TNHSP will make infrastructure enhancements wherever necessary, Dr. Amarnath Babu added.