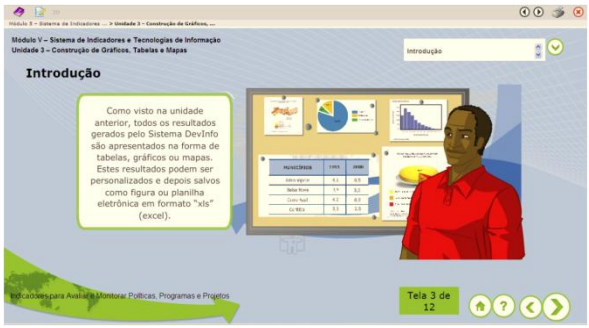
DevInfo in Action

Brazil: Using DevInfo to Support Indicator-Based Training and Analysis

A statistician with the Health Department in Salvador (the largest city on Brazil's northeast coast and the capital of Bahia state), Jessidenes Leal had devoted four years to developing a set of indicators to track the performance and quality of the state's health information system. Still not satisfied with the output, Leal was looking to strengthen his understanding of health sector indicators. But where would he go locally to find something suitable to meet his professional needs?

Thanks to a new e-learning course offered by ORBIS, a Brazilian NGO based in the country's southern Paraná state, working professionals in the field such as Leal are now able to learn how to use socio-economic indicators to support all aspects of their work – without having to leave their own offices.



Titled, "Indicators to Monitor and Evaluate Policies, Programs and Projects," the e-learning course represents an initiative of ORBIS, in partnership with UNICEF and UNDP. Launched in January 2011, the course teaches participants how to define, interpret and analyze social indicators, how to understand the structure of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and how to use the DevInfo database platform to support planning and decision-making in their own sphere.

According to Angelo Tadini, course tutor and project analyst with ORBIS, "The course targets people working in local governments and government agencies, NGOs, neighbourhood associations, universities, private companies, and the community at large."

As to why the DevInfo platform was selected as the foundation of the course, Tadini explains, "DevInfo allows the simplest to the most complex indicator concepts to be easily explained and analyzed. Also, besides being free, everyone finds DevInfo easy to understand and very useful."

The course is divided into five modules, progressing from basic to advanced indicator concepts, and requires a solid forty hours of study to complete. Participants remotely access the modules, available in Portuguese and Spanish, at their own convenience. They are encouraged to ask questions, share thoughts, and discuss issues via an online forum or even live chat with an ORBIS-assigned course tutor.

To date, 3,000 students – mainly professionals working in municipal administration - have accessed the course, with over 800 completing all five modules.

According to Leal, "Thanks to this course, we now have a better understanding of how to construct

indicators. Using the knowledge gained in this course, we developed an information manual on health indicators which we plan to publish online. We also plan to go deeper and take further classroom courses on the DevInfo Data Administration application, so we can create and work with our own databases."

Many other professionals who have taken the course echo similar praise. Leilivânia Silva, an economics consultant working with a Brazilian NGO, found herself collaborating on an MDG project in partnership with Petrobrás, UN-Habitat and the Federal University of Maranhão. Looking to strengthen her understanding of MDGs, she found a link to ORBIS' course on the UNDP website and decided to take it.

"This course is great!" proclaims Silva. "It is simple and interactive, and it greatly helped me to understand the MDG project I am working on.Besides, it has helped me work better with indicators and improved my understanding of creating graphs. Additionally, it has introduced me to DevInfo, which I found to be a very interesting tool."

According to Tadini, ORBIS translated the course into Spanish in order to make it more accessible across Latin America, and several students have already begun taking the Spanish version. "We're presently looking for partners to translate our course into English," he added.

Thanks to DevInfo and ORBIS, professionals such as Jessidenes Leal and Leilivânia Silva can now learn systematically how to use social indicators to support planning, monitoring, evaluation and decision-making.

Editor's note: If you have other good examples of DevInfo training materials to share, please send us a note at support@devinfo.info.

Data making a difference.

For more information, please contact Angelo Tadini, Course Tutor, Indicators to Monitor and Evaluate Policies, Programs and Projects, ORBIS, at angelo.tadini@sesipr.org.br.