CUSTOMER CASE
Dyne Advanced Analytics

The UNHCR looks after the health of 1.5 million refugees with help from a bespoke version of SPSS designed specifically for its needs

„The coaching was excellent and very useful.“

Christopher Haskew, responsible for the UNHCR Health Information System

The UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, whose headquarters are in Geneva, was founded in 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The mission of the refugee agency is to co-ordinate protection of refugees and to guarantee their rights and well-being.

In the past decades, the UNHCR has helped several ten million people to start a new life. Today, around 6,600 people work for the organisation in over 110 countries and support more than 34 million people. In 2009, the yearly budget reached a record level of USD 2.3 billion.

The Health Information System supports people in refugee camps

Christopher Haskew works at the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva, in the Public Health department. He is responsible for the Health Information System (HIS), a standardised tool to develop health programmes for refugees, provide assistance for their implementation and assess them. The HIS collects health data from 1.5 million refugees in 85 camps in 17 countries in Asia and Africa. It contains indicators to control the programme on the ground, in order to control nourishment, vaccinations and outbreaks of illnesses such as HIV/AIDS.

The condition of refugees should be improved thanks to more precise information and better health programmes.

Christopher Haskew supports the local UNHCR country programmes in collecting and analysing data and secures the regular flow of data between countries, regional offices and headquarters. „The main goal is to improve decisions concerning public health“, he says. „Based on data collected, we can better steer the programme on the ground and therefore have a greater influence on refugees' health.“

Christopher Haskew studied medicine in the UK and then did a further degree in Public Health; he has worked for the UNHCR for six years. To begin with he worked in Nepal as a health co-ordinator. In this role, he discovered that reliable data on refugees' health was lacking.

We have been SPSS (Switzerland) for 15 years.

Once back in Geneva, he put his experience to developing the new HIS. Before the HIS was introduced, every country collected data with its own reporting system, using different methods. Since the HIS was implemented in the first countries in 2006, all data collected worldwide is standardised and easy to compare. Christopher Haskew's work is much in demand. He presents the results to decision-makers and facilitates their use for strategic discussions and for fund raising. His reports help the UNHCR to better apply valuable resources. In order to avoid losing contact with what's happening on the ground, he regularly travels to refugee camps in Asia and Africa.

Dynelytics offers UNHCR support, programming and coaching

Christopher Haskew already worked from time to time with SPSS Statistic software in the past. His first contact with Dynelytics' (formerly SPSS Schweiz) support services was very positive: "You people at Dynelytics are a huge help. I bombard you with requests and always get very good reactions!"

But it soon became clear that his wishes exceeded the services of free technical support. So, Dynelytics suggested implementing a project for the UNHCR to help him carry out his tasks more efficiently. In a very short time-frame, Dynelytics programmed an individual SPSS dialogue, tailor-made to Christopher Haskew's requirements. The new custom dialogue function was thus introduced.

Now, using SPSS Statistics he can open the UNHCR dialogue and define the parameters required for his work. He specifies the required

Christopher Haskew on the subject of Dynelytics' support:

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MS Access database and the syntax file, in order to label characteristics, and he chooses tables inside the database that he wants to assess. Then, using the Python programming language, SPSS automatically replaces missing values with meaningful average values and replaces or excludes outliers.

SPSS Statistics has become an indispensable aid for Christopher Haskew; he uses it every day and really appreciates the software. Every month, with help from the UNHCR Dialogue, he assesses new data, corrects values where necessary and sometimes directly contacts regional offices to clear up questions. He then delivers the assessments to the offices with charts and tables on refugee camps and countries. With this feedback, he can compare different health programmes.

Data from the Health Information System (HIS) show, for example, a great decline in cases of malaria in Africa. Due to better endowed and co-ordinated health programmes, the average number of malaria cases per 1000 refugees was able to be reduced from over 150 to less than 50. This success is reducible to better treatment for sick peoples, the distribution of mosquito nets treated with insecticide and fast diagnosis. These are the main elements of the UNHCR malaria prevention strategy.

The health information system is expanded

In 2010, Christopher Haskew booked one day's one-to-one coaching with an expert from Dynelytics. He remembers the experience: „The coaching was excellent and very useful. I learned more about statistical techniques and how to interpret results. I am now able to create custom dialogues myself."

The project continues to grow. The UNHCR is adapting the HIS for use outside the field of refugee camps, so that districts or urban areas can be included in the observation. It was recently introduced in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo to support monitoring of local health programmes. The next phase plans to offer the HIS database reporting via the Web. ●

MORE INFO

→ Healthcare Analytics Solutions:

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