

HEALTH METRICS NETWORK



EVERYONE COUNTS

Better Information. Better Decisions. Better Health.





Imagine a world where no death goes unrecorded, where a baby's first cry is heard around the globe. Imagine a world where understanding one person's illness helps prevent the sickness of many. This is a world with sound health information systems.

The Power of Shared Information

It's a world where every life counts and is counted. A world where every death matters and is recorded. Reliable and timely information is the foundation of public health, as in other aspects of human development. Clinicians, health care managers, public health practitioners, governments, and donors need sound data to identify the most pressing public health needs as well as the most effective interventions. Sadly, the countries with the most severe health problems are also those with the weakest health information and statistical systems. Yet, it's not because countries are poor that they cannot afford information. It's because they are poor that they cannot afford to be without it.



WHO WE ARE

Health Metrics Network (HMN) is a global partnership working to improve health and save lives through stronger health information systems. HMN was founded on the premise that better information means better decision-making — and that means better health for everyone.

The partnership brings together users and producers of health data — countries, statistical and health experts, development partners, foundations, and global health initiatives — in a shared endeavor to increase the availability and use of timely, reliable health information through country-led plans to strengthen information systems. HMN partners collaborate to catalyze energies and resources in support of stronger health information systems in developing countries.

We are working to reduce overlapping demands on fragile information systems in developing countries.



WHAT WE BELIEVE

Improving health information — in terms of how it is gathered, analyzed and used — offers the promise of better decisions, better spending, and an enhanced ability to track and confront threats to world health. Informed decisions are better decisions.

The world is getting more complex, and so are our public health challenges. While we understand much more than we did 10 or 20 years ago, due to important investments in data collection, there remains a huge gap between what we know and what we need to know to improve health.

Grappling with challenges as different as identifying and tracking disease outbreaks such as polio; or monitoring progress towards health initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), requires better data.

The need for better information systems is not confined to the health sector. Across the development community, demand is growing to improve the capacity of national and international statistical systems to produce and use data for development.



“...it’s not because countries are poor that they cannot afford good health information. It’s because they are poor that they cannot afford to be without it.”



OUR GOAL

HMN’s goal is to increase the availability and use of timely and accurate health information in countries and globally through shared agreement on goals and coordinated investments in core health information systems.

OUR PLAN

To meet our goal, HMN will pursue three key objectives:

- **HMN FRAMEWORK** HMN partners have developed a consensus-based framework to align efforts around agreed upon standards, methods, and analyses.
- **COUNTRY IMPLEMENTATION** Partners are supporting developing countries in adapting and applying this framework to improve their health information systems and catalyzing joint funding of these efforts.
- **UNIVERSAL ACCESS** HMN partners are encouraging widespread use of health information through policies, systems, and incentives.

OUR TARGET

By 2011, HMN expects to document improved health outcomes that can be credibly attributed to increased use of information for decision-making in at least 80 developing countries.

HMN: SEEDING SUCCESS AROUND THE WORLD

HMN is laying the groundwork for significant improvements to health information systems around the world. We are currently working with local officials in dozens of low- and middle-income countries to build greater capacity and expertise for strengthening health information systems so local, regional, and global decision-makers have better data on which to base decisions to improve health.



- Countries are using HMN support to assess their current status and develop comprehensive, consensus-based plans for strengthening their health information systems.
- With HMN support, several low-income countries are working to identify ways of increasing the coverage and quality of their systems for recording vital events: births, deaths, and causes of death.
- HMN is working with countries to find innovative approaches to sharing experiences and lessons learned on how to enhance availability and use of data for decision-making.



HMN: NEW APPROACHES TO OLD PROBLEMS

The challenge of better health information in resource-constrained settings requires new approaches and techniques. Working with a wide array of technical and development partners, HMN is supporting exciting new initiatives to address certain long-known barriers to better data.



- The cornerstone of a country's health information system is the registration of births, deaths, and causes of death. Unfortunately, years of under-investment have left many low-income countries unable to establish and properly sustain such systems. HMN is supporting research and development of innovative, cost-effective approaches for counting deaths and their causes, including the use of sentinel and sample systems as well as verbal autopsies to classify cause of death.
- Health sector reform and the decentralization of decision-making in many countries have increased the demand for sound data to inform health care managers and planners. HMN is supporting the development of measurement strategies to track the availability and distribution of health system metrics such as human resources, infrastructure, equipment, supplies, and interventions that will help streamline the demand and empower local decision-makers.



BECOMING A PART OF HMN

While the need to improve health information systems is great, the opportunities to contribute are even greater. There are many ways to be a part of HMN:

1. Engage in and support technical or operational research activities that are a part of the HMN work plan;
2. Work directly with countries to strengthen their health information systems aligned with the HMN Framework;
3. Share best practices through the InfoShare feature on HMN's Web site;
4. Sign-up to receive the HMN quarterly newsletter; and
5. Offer direct financial contributions to HMN for its "catalyst" work at the global, regional, or country levels.

For more information about how you can be involved in HMN's work, please contact us.



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H M N P A R T N E R S

- African Population and Health Research Center
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.)
- Danish International Development Agency
- Department for International Development (U.K.)
 - European Commission
- Ghana Health Service
 - The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
- Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- Ministry of Health, Mexico
- Ministry of Public Health, Thailand
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- Statistics South Africa
 - Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- Uganda Bureau of Statistics
- UNICEF
 - United Nations Population Fund
- United Nations Statistics Division
- United States Agency for International Development
- World Bank
- World Health Organization

• *indicates members of the HMN Board*

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BUILDING A CULTURE OF INFORMATION

HMN Partners speak out on the power of shared information

"There is something fundamentally wrong in a system in which children are born and they live and die and there is no knowledge of such existence...we need information for today to make decisions about where we invest today and where we go tomorrow. Informed decisions are better decisions. It's that simple."

Dr. Alex Ezeh, Executive Director, Africa Population and Health Research Center

"Decisions that are based on evidence, not speculation, are decisions that are most likely to improve health. HMN is working to help countries strengthen their health information systems so that countries and the global health community are better equipped to handle existing and future health challenges."

Dr. David Fleming, Director, Global Health Strategies, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

"Without sound health information, developing countries and donor organizations are unable to allocate their funding to improve people's health and help achieve the Millennium Development Goals of lowering child and maternal mortality and reducing the spread of major diseases. Investments in health information are investments in the health of everyone."

**Brian Hammond, Development Co-operation Directorate,
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**

"Information gives you the power to make the right decisions."

Dr. Roberto Tapia Conyer, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Health, Mexico

"It's much, much more effective if we can reach a common view about what is required and then help the government to go and collect that information than all of us come in with our tape measures and our slide rules and doing our own measuring because it's not a very sensible way of doing things, and we can do it better."

**Minister Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for International Development,
Department for International Development (U.K.)**

"If you have a very efficient surveillance system in every country, immediately when there is a new case or possibility of pandemic, the information will flow at the speed of light."

**Dr. Suwit Wibulpolprasert, Senior Advisor on Health Economics,
Ministry of Public Health, Thailand and Chair of the HMN Board**