



May 30, 2014

From the Director

Greetings! I'm pleased to share with you the first edition of the Better Immunization Data – or **BID Initiative's** quarterly newsletter. This newsletter is designed to keep you informed of the many activities taking place as a part of the initiative. Since PATH received its five-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help countries strengthen their immunization management systems, the BID Initiative team has hit the ground running. We're now near the close of our planning phase and preparing for initial stages of implementation with our first two demonstration country partners Tanzania and Zambia.

Partnership and collaboration are at the core of the BID Initiative's approach and part of our guiding principles. We look forward to continue engaging with you, keep you apprised of our progress, and collectively work toward building stronger immunization programs through improved data quality and use.

Sincerely,

Liz Peloso
 Director, the BID Initiative
 PATH

The BID Initiative Overview

The BID Initiative's strategy is based on the premise that better data, plus better decisions, will lead to better health outcomes. Designed to shine a light on the challenges surrounding data collection, quality, and use, the BID Initiative will identify practical, country-owned,

The BID Initiative's vision is to empower countries to enhance immunization and overall health services

country-led solutions in immunization that could spread to other health interventions. We will partner with countries and global health stakeholders to develop and deploy a holistic approach that focuses on information system products, data sharing policies and practices, and the people that use them. The approach will be demonstrated in three different country contexts, one of which will be at scale, and if effective, packaged so that it can be easily and cost-effectively adopted by other countries interested in using it to improve their immunization management.

and overall health service delivery through improved data collection, quality, and use.

If we're successful, a true tipping point will occur—one in which countries can access, analyze, and act upon accurate immunization data—anytime, anywhere, resulting in improved immunization outcomes.

Guiding Principles

- **Utilize a coordinated approach.** Coordinate with other key initiatives and organizations to collaborate on and/or share experiences to strengthen national immunization systems and integrated delivery of care.
- **Country ownership and capacity development.** Focus on countries' primary ownership and responsibilities for establishing good governance and for providing effective, high-quality immunization services for all, as well as identifying and addressing capacity-building needs.
- **Interoperability.** Where possible, any system modules developed will be closely coordinated with existing information system dependencies.
- **Innovation.** Leverage the latest learning and technology to ensure the design of an innovative solution.
- **Sustainability.** Consider the solution's need for long-term sustainability throughout its development process and the work with demonstration countries.
- **Openness.** Remain committed to openness, and include promotion and use of open architecture, industry-based standards, and transparent, shared processes and methodologies, and openly share requirements and other technology knowledge components.
- **Strategic reuse.** Organize to extract reusable components from appropriate projects and build new, shared components and platforms as required.
- **Research, monitoring and evaluation.** Contribute to the body of knowledge that informs future investment through utilization-focused research.

A Note from our Funder: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

The improvement of immunization data systems is a priority of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Routine Immunization strategy. These systems today often do not provide sufficient quality data, nor make data accessible to the people who need it in order to make timely, well-informed decisions about how to best reach un- and under-immunized children.

PATH and the Gates Foundation share a hypothesis that in order for these systems to change, we need to develop a suite of interventions that not only explore system improvements via new products, but also change the policies, practices and culture of the people within the system. The BID initiative explores this hypothesis that the simultaneous deployment of interventions across products, policies, people and practices will succeed in increasing evidence-based decision-making. We believe that the approach that the BID Initiative takes-- prioritizing affordability and country ownership over innovation and timeliness-- will enable this suite of interventions to scale sustainably.

We are excited about making progress toward reaching a world where everyone in the health system has the information he or she needs to build a stronger immunization program.

Where we've been

Country Consultation Meeting

In October 2013, the BID Initiative convened more than 20 delegates across ten African countries for a country consultation meeting. Hosted by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and held in Nairobi, Kenya, the event brought country delegated Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) and eHealth decision-makers together with supporting organizations, such as UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters and its African Regional Office (AFRO) to discuss challenges and opportunities for improving data quality and use around immunization coverage.



Active participation from country delegates provided valuable insights that have and will continue to shape and guide the next steps of the BID Initiative and its approach. Key takeaways included:

- Systems and processes need to find the balance that meets the needs of health care providers, are simple enough to integrate into day-to-day workflows, and also contain relevant indicators to improve data quality and use.
- Challenges exist due to a lack of integration with disparate technology systems and processes—these need greater synchronicity and harmonization.
- Empowering EPI managers at the national, sub-national, facility, and community

levels to make evidence-based decisions will facilitate improvements in data quality; this, in turn, is a feedback loop that nurtures a culture of data use for decision-making.

- Technology systems require training, capacity building, and maintenance at all levels—local and national—to facilitate improvements in data quality and use and to foster sustainability; finding key points of interoperability among current systems will help streamline this process.
- EPI and eHealth workers require a common language to help better understand how to bring together expertise and share accountability in improving immunization data quality and use for better decision-making; creating a joint learning network or group where information can be shared among peers is valuable.

For more context on the importance of improved immunization data and the potential impact of the BID Initiative's success, Dr. Orin Levine, director of Vaccine Delivery at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, highlighted key points from the meeting in a [Huffington Post blog](#).

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Tools Developer Summit

Furthering the BID Initiative's collaborative approach, in December 2013, the initiative hosted a Tools Developer Summit at the PATH office in Washington, D.C. This meeting brought information and communication technology (ICT) developers together with the BID Initiative team, partners, and donors to explore the



challenges in immunization systems in Africa. The participants focused on how ICT could be used to address three key challenges: beneficiary interfacing, patient identification, and supply chain management. Over the course of two days, participants shared their expertise and discussed opportunities for ongoing collaboration in order to solve these problems.

The summit paved the way for a deeper understanding of the tools available to help eliminate barriers around data quality and use and a commitment from tools developers to collaborate and increase interoperability. Over the next few months, the BID Initiative will complete analysis of immunization workflows, prototype enterprise architectures, and publish a draft buyer's guide to help countries evaluate options.

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Country Visits

Over the past several months, the BID Initiative conducted analyses on countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to determine which would be best suited as a demonstration country. This process included a preliminary desk review, followed by more in-depth analysis of demographics, governance, EPI data, and eHealth infrastructure information, among others.

A key determinant of success for this initiative is that the countries are true partners in

this effort and will commit up front to helping design and advocate for it. To supplement the intensive review, field teams conducted select country visits to meet with key decision-makers in ministries of health and discuss challenges and opportunities for improving data quality and use around immunization coverage. These meetings were critical in identifying which countries had the desire to partner and play an integral role in the BID Initiative. After an initial round of scoping visits, followed by in-depth visits to potential implementation sites, Tanzania and Zambia emerged as viable demonstration country partners.

Where we're Going

BID Network Meeting in Kigali 26 May – 28 May 2014

In May, the BID Initiative will host its first BID Learning Network meeting in Kigali, bringing together roughly 30 country representatives and key stakeholders in the fields of EPI and eHealth. Designed to provide a platform for peers to exchange knowledge in order to find solutions to shared challenges, the BID Learning Network's inaugural meeting will build off the country consultation meeting and discuss ideas and national strategies in use across Africa to improve immunization rates and share the BID Learning Network vision, among other topics. During this meeting, the BID Initiative will also launch its website, which will feature a collaborative platform designed to foster increased sharing and discussion.

Kicking off in Tanzania and Zambia

Visits to Tanzania and Zambia, conducted earlier this year, provided the opportunity to further socialize the BID Initiative with regional and district leadership, set the tone for a multi-year collaboration and begin joint assessments and strategic planning around BID Initiative interventions. The BID Initiative is taking next steps to formalize a partnership with demonstration countries Tanzania and Zambia and further plan for initial implementations.

Led by PATH and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Better Immunization Data (BID) Initiative is grounded in the belief that better data, plus better decisions will lead to better health outcomes. Its vision is to empower countries to enhance immunization and overall health service delivery through improved data collection, quality, and use.

Photo: Name of photographer.

The BID Initiative c/o PATH

Mail: PO Box 900922 | Seattle, WA 98109 USA

Street: 2201 Westlake Avenue, Suite 200 | Seattle, WA 98121 USA

Tel: 206.285.3500 | Fax: 206.285.6619

BIIDinitiative@path.org

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