

BID Learning Network (BLN) Study Visit Concept Note

Implementing Entity: BLN

Background

The BID Initiative, led by PATH and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, seeks to enhance immunization and overall health service delivery through improved data collection, quality, and use. Embedded within the BID Initiative structure is the BID Learning Network (BLN) which is intended to facilitate peer learning and dissemination of innovations and lessons learned. The goal of the BLN is to bring countries together to identify shared problems and solutions; use that knowledge to design common information system products, practices, and data policies that will be useful to all; experiment with these designs in countries to determine their applicability; and then use this experience to inform national and global decision-making. Through this collaborative design and learning model, the solutions should be more readily accessible to other countries. Ultimately, by adapting and implementing the common products, practices, and policies, the BLN will contribute to increased immunization rates through improved data collection, quality, and use.

The BLN addresses challenges in the availability of timely high quality data that can be used for decision making, with the output of improving health care delivery. This includes a consideration of how to rapidly and cost-effectively develop new strategies that can improve the management of national health systems and how to design a set of solutions in one country that can be adapted and used by many. The BLN addresses these challenges by bringing together a diverse and varied set of country experiences into the design and dissemination of these new strategies.

The goals of the network are to:

- Bring countries together to identify shared problems and solutions while connecting with peers.
- Use this knowledge to design common information system products, practices, and data policies.
- Experiment with these designs to determine their applicability.
- Use this experience to inform national and global decision-making.

BLN uses a number of strategies to attain these goals. One strategy is to conduct study visits that enable peers to learn from other projects in a manner that not only allows the transfer of knowledge and skills among them, but also enables a fostering of professional relationships among people working on solutions that address similar problems. The purpose of this document is to elaborate the objectives, approach and key expected accomplishments of the BLN study visits.

The structure of BLN accommodates country participation at three levels: *Demonstration countries* with whom there is a deep partnership and high resource commitment on behalf of the BID Initiative; *Design countries* who participate in designing BID solutions and have the

opportunity to access targeted resources; and *Discussion countries* who are provided with information and updates and have access to BID Initiative learnings.

The BLN also has a Peer Advisory Group (PAG) representing West/Central and East/Southern Africa that advises the BLN Directorate on the appropriateness of topics and activities of the network. This group is composed of six members with a Francophone/Anglophone and regional balance.

Objectives

The objectives of the study visits are two-fold:

1. Enable BLN demonstration and design countries to learn from projects that have made accomplishments with regard to improving data collection, quality, and use. Change management, registry development, and logistics management in African or similar contexts will be particularly emphasized.
2. Promote the fostering of professional relationships between BLN participants and others working in the fields of interest.

These objectives are linked to Outcome 3 of the BID Initiative mandate: to achieve national implementation of the BID solution in one demonstration country, implementation of components of the BID solution in two other demonstration countries, and commitment toward implementation by 5-8 other country governments within Sub-Saharan Africa by 2018. We are aiming to achieve Outcome 3 through the work of the BLN and its associated activities.

Approach

Identification of appropriate sites for study visits will follow a consultative process and will involve the PAG, professionals in the areas of interest, implementing partners, and other organizations. Micro plans will be developed by the BLN for each visit and appropriately budgeted. To participate in a study visit, individuals or groups are invited to apply by submitting the application materials which are made available on the BID Initiative website.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes from these visits include:

- Acceleration of data solution development in countries that will enable efficiency in data collection, quality, and use.
- Strengthened peer-to-peer interactions and development of a well-coordinated body of professionals with access to state of the art knowledge in data generation, management, and use.
- Development of appropriate solutions to data quality and use challenges in BLN countries that can be adopted by other countries in similar settings across the African continent.

Measurement

The effectiveness of the study visits will be measured through routine surveys (via Survey Monkey), administered to hosts and visitors alike upon completion of a visit and beyond.

Criteria for Site Selection and Participation

Criteria for selecting sites:

- Ability to showcase a “success story” in all its complexities and multi-pronged innovations, encompassing not only the technical aspects but also the human resources, change management, financial sustainability, scale, user involvement, and so on.
- Solutions/innovations not linked to a short-term ‘pilot’ to support health systems, but a long-term strategy to institutionalize the innovations and strengthen the health system.
- Willingness to share experiences through multiple channels including: presentations, discussions involving the government, implementation partners, users, civil society, solution providers (and others as relevant), field visits, detailed demonstrations of the solutions applied, and provision of any other pertinent information.
- Easy access: the facility and its location must not be of a sensitive nature so that obtaining authorization from relevant authorities will not be a problem.
- Security: the security of the country to be visited will be considered and only those countries with a low security risk will be considered.

Criteria for selecting members of delegation:

- Experience at the sites visited must be directly linked to the participant’s work back in their home country.
- Must be able to directly use what s/he learns (e.g., must have adequate authority to influence translation of learnings into practice).
- Must have the willingness and ability to summarize learnings and communicate them to colleagues back in their home country, and convert them into a plan of action to be proposed to government.