



BID INITIATIVE

Better data. Better decisions. **Better health.**

SAVING LIVES THROUGH BETTER DATA

Strategies and Tactics from the BID Initiative

Q3 2017

Letter from the Director

This past quarter, the BID Initiative focused on sharing and applying its learnings as we expand to other regions in Tanzania and districts in Zambia. The last few months have seen many exciting milestones, including the [BID Learning Network's \(BLN\) final Discussion Meeting](#), a showcase event featuring Zambia's first lady, [Mrs. Esther Lungu](#), and a BLN study visit co-hosted by the [Pan American Health Organization to Santiago, Chile](#). It also saw the forging of new partnerships, as in Kenya, where we've [worked with I-TECH](#) to adapt and deploy a localized version of the Zambia Electronic Immunization Registry.

Beyond Tanzania and Zambia, the BID Initiative hopes to see the successful application of data quality and data use interventions to other countries and contexts. We're calling for a radical shift away from the current paradigm—data streams that don't communicate with the existing health system, software codes hidden behind proprietary black boxes, and technologies that duplicate the missteps that came before them. To unlock the potential of digital health and strengthen health information systems, interventions must build on and apply lessons from other technologies and programs. These principles have always guided

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The BID Learning Network (BLN) is intended to be a platform where participants

BID's work with the governments of Tanzania and Zambia, and recently we've been able to validate our approaches with health worker testimonies and interventions at scale.

This quarter, we launched a new [series of briefs summarizing our recommendations and lessons learned](#) across a wide range of subject areas, including [change management](#), [peer learning](#), and the [software development cycle](#). We also released two new videos—*The Power of Data* and *A Smarter Zambia*—to highlight Zambia's commitment to closing the immunization gap with timely, high-quality data. We hope these resources, and the [digital health toolkit](#) we're jointly launching with the World Health Organization, will aid other countries interested in implementing data quality and data use interventions.

Please continue to follow our journey by finding us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribing to our [blog](#).

Sincerely,



Laurie Werner
Global Director, the BID Initiative
PATH

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Zambia celebrates progress in showcase event attended by First Lady Mrs. Esther Lungu

can contribute ideas, share experiences and actively participate, helping each other as they face similar challenges.

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NOTEWORTHY BLOG POSTS

[Zambia's First Lady praises progress as the BID Initiative celebrates improvements in data quality and use](#)

[BID Learning Network participants trade experiences and share learnings in Santiago, Chile](#)

[BID Initiative partners with I-TECH to track vaccinations with better data](#)

[Hello Tanga!](#)

NOTEWORTHY RESOURCES

[BID Initiative Briefs: Recommendations and Lessons Learned](#)

[Video: A Smarter Zambia](#)

[Video: The Power of Data](#)

[BLN Webinar: Identifying and Addressing Challenges in Deploying an Electronic Registry – The Ghana Health Service Experience](#)



When Lynn Kachinka's first child was born at Mahatma Gandhi Clinic in Livingstone, Zambia, delays were all too common. Immunization sessions took most of the morning, often taking mothers, like Lynn, away from their daily chores and responsibilities. Sometimes, there would be 30 to 40 other patients receiving vaccines, and the clinic would run out of stock before all patients had received their immunizations.

"When my first child was born, there was no [electronic immunization] system like there is today. There used to be a lot of delays," remembers Lynn. "We would sometimes find that there were no medicines."

When her youngest child was born this past spring, instead of experiencing long queues and tedious paper registries, Lynn was met by a collection of digital tools and interventions that have improved immunization service delivery.

"This time, it was fast," she remembers.

Zambia's Ministry of Health (MOH) has worked hard, with the support of the BID Initiative, to improve national immunization services by addressing challenges such as incomplete, untimely, and inaccurate data, and inadequate monitoring of the vaccine supply chain. Their progress toward this goal was showcased this past July in Lusaka to stakeholders working in maternal and child health, including [guest of honor Mrs. Esther Lungu, Zambia's first lady](#). Mrs. Lungu is an advocate for maternal and child health, and believes that "no child on the African continent should die because we have denied them lifesaving vaccines."

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Led by PATH and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the 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.



Photos: PATH/Mali Kambandu. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. PATH/Reuben Mwanza.

During the showcase event, Mrs. Lungu emphasized that the Zambian government has prioritized maternal and child health in its development agenda. “The MOH seeks to ensure that interventions which advance the promotion of health and prevention of diseases are brought as close as possible to every community. The BID Initiative is a good example of this agenda and I will continue to support it.”

Also present during the event was Minister of Health Dr. Chitalu Chilufya and other senior staff members of the MOH. Dr. Chilufya expressed his support for the rollout of data quality and data use interventions, and looked to the future. This support is critical as the MOH continues ongoing coordination of government partners to advance data quality and data use interventions in Zambia’s remaining nine provinces.

“What we need to emphasize is how we go beyond Southern Province and reach the whole country,” says Dr. Chilufya, “because we want to reach all of Zambia.”

Tanzania hosts Bill Gates and celebrates the launch of the Data Use Partnership



This quarter, the BID Initiative had the pleasure of hosting **Bill Gates at Ngamiani Health Center in Tanga, Tanzania**. The visit was an opportunity to celebrate our progress, **as we reflect on our expansion to two new regions in the country, Tanga and**

Kilimanjaro. It was also a chance to showcase the growing culture of data use within Tanzania's health system.

During the visit, health workers demonstrated the Tanzania Electronic Immunization Registry (TImR) and explained the many benefits they'd begun to see as a result of data quality and data use interventions. Millen Nkuza, for instance, a nurse at Ngamiani, finds managing vaccine stocks much more manageable. Data visualizations help her understand when she's at or below stock, and whether these will meet current patient volumes.

"I demoed how easy it was to retrieve a child's information and also how to access the automated reports and the decisions I can make from them," she recalls. "For instance, we looked at the coverage report where we got to see the percentage of children vaccinated on-time, [compared to] all the children that were [expected] to be vaccinated in that period of time, and [discussed] what actions can be done to improve [immunization]."

Bill Gates' visit also saw the launch of the [next phase of Tanzania's Data Use Partnership \(DUP\)](#), which builds on and accelerates the BID Initiative's progress in the country. DUP will work alongside the government of Tanzania to improve data systems and data use across the entire health sector. By engaging the full health sector, the government will be better equipped for disease outbreaks, correcting the performance of underachieving health facilities, and managing patients with a complex continuum of care.

"Existing information is often fragmented and piecemeal," explains Dr. Mpoki Ulisubisya, Permanent Secretary of Tanzania's Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children. "You may encounter pockets of robust HIV statistics, or a clear picture of malaria prevalence in one community, but not in another community nearby. The lack of coordination between those funding, developing, and using data systems, frequently maroons valuable information on 'data islands,' undermining the ability to effectively access or share information."

Governments and global stakeholders have expressed a growing interest in and demand for better data and integrated health information systems. Tanzania is at the forefront of these efforts, with the potential to become a global leader in using better data for better health outcomes.

BID Learning Network hosts final Discussion Meeting, plans for future



Four years after it convened its first Discussion Meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, the BLN hosted its final session under the current grant in Lusaka, Zambia, in late September. The meeting kicked off with a crowd of more than 100 enthusiastic delegates. As in years past, delegates participated in a range of activities, including panel discussions, site visits to health facilities in Mazabuka, and progress updates from countries implementing data quality and data use interventions, including Tanzania, Zambia, and The Gambia, among others.

But for many delegates, this year's Discussion Meeting meant something different: it was an opportunity to cement their learnings. The BLN provides a platform for policymakers and practitioners to share their successes and failures, facilitating innovative solutions that can be put to work more quickly than those developed through more traditional channels.

In The Gambia, for instance, a country piloting its own electronic immunization registry, the Ministry of Health chose to use tablets and laptops to manage their electronic registry, as opposed to desktop computers, based on feedback gleaned from Ghana, another BLN member country implementing data management systems to improve immunization coverage.

"The BLN is a space for exchanges between actors in the field of improving the quality of health data in general, including vaccination data. I think this is one of the best answers to the challenge of improving data quality among the various BLN member countries," says Dr. Boubacar Camara from Agence Nationale de Télésanté et d'Informatique Médicale, Mali.

The BLN hopes to continue evolving and growing even as our current grant comes to an end next year. BLN delegates voiced their desire to see the peer learning network live on, and called for more government participation in and ownership of the network. They also expressed interest in an organizational framework to facilitate more solid governance, private-sector engagement, and designated representatives from each member country. Finally, BLN members called for regional recognition of the network, as it already speaks to the Addis Declaration on Immunization and immunization data can serve as a springboard for capturing other maternal, neonatal, and child health data.

Future renderings of the BLN will address the sustainability and evolution of the learning network, while remaining cognizant of lessons learned, current opportunities, and the possibility of public-private partnerships.

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