



BID INITIATIVE

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

SAVING LIVES THROUGH BETTER DATA

Strategies and Tactics from the BID Initiative

Q4 2019

Letter from the director

As we kick off 2020, we are looking back at everything we have achieved in the last year and the many exciting opportunities on the horizon. This year ushers in the start of a new decade, bringing with it the growing leadership of the governments of Tanzania and Zambia as they take digital solutions to scale, the mounting evidence base for digital and data, and exciting new partnerships that promise to advance health equity.

If the early 2000s were a decade defined by [“pilotitis,” a digital health phenomenon](#) where narrowly focused interventions target small populations and vertical health programs that fail to scale, this next decade promises to be one of increasing collaboration, scale-up, and sustainability—all trends that we’ve embraced within the [BID Learning Network \(BLN\)](#). In the year ahead, we will see a new partnership take shape with the government of Zambia to strengthen all components of the country’s immunization system. The innovative collaboration couples the Zambia Electronic Immunization Registry (ZEIR), already in use across

Southern Province, with other efforts to improve vaccine stock management, data analysis among Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) managers, and a community-based SMS platform to remind mothers and caregivers about upcoming immunization appointments.

The year will also bring greater cohesion between digital initiatives in Tanzania, where the government just approved a new [Digital Health Strategy \(2019–2024\)](#) and convened a National Digital Health Steering Committee. As technology outpaces health systems and investments increase in the digital health sector, both the strategy and the steering committee will offer guidance and a clear path for leveraging digital and data tools for health impact.

Finally, 2020 will highlight an expanded set of BLN services, including a mentorship program that pairs countries across sub-Saharan Africa with technical experts from among PATH's Tanzania and Zambia offices as well as creating connections to broader global resources. The BLN's growing commitment to peer learning will include advisory, capacity-building, and knowledge management services for countries hoping to improve their own health information systems.

For these and other stories from BID, the BLN, and other data and digital health initiatives, [subscribe to our blog](#) and find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). We are thrilled to embark on this journey with you, and grateful for your continued support. Cheers to a new year and a new decade!

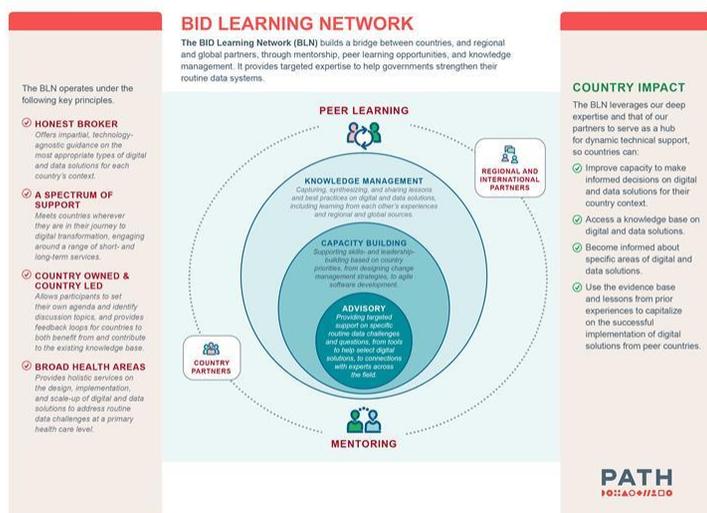
Sincerely,



Laurie Werner
Global Director, the BID Initiative
PATH

Si vous désirez recevoir la version française de notre bulletin d'information, veuillez vous [abonner ici](#).

**BID Learning Network refreshes
mentorship approach for countries
interested in adopting digital
solutions**



The [BID Learning Network](#) brings together digital health experts and immunization program managers from across sub-Saharan Africa to exchange experiences in implementing electronic immunization registries, data management systems, change management approaches, and data use policies and practices.

“We have long shared our expertise with other countries interested in learning from the BID Initiative’s experience in Tanzania and Zambia. It’s a core tenet of our efforts,” explained Hassan Mtenga, Country Lead for the BLN’s regional programming. “But this mentorship program is an opportunity to formalize the program and benefit governments embarking on their own digital journeys, while building a hub for professional peer learning.”

Late last year, the BLN revisited its approach to better address the range of inquiries and needs from countries interested in adopting similar digital solutions for their own health systems. Under the new model, the BLN will function as an honest broker to countries and ministries of health. The BLN offers impartial, technology-agnostic guidance on the most appropriate digital and data solutions for each country’s context. It provides critical neutrality to country governments that must navigate differing priorities from donors, implementing partners, and stakeholders within the health system.

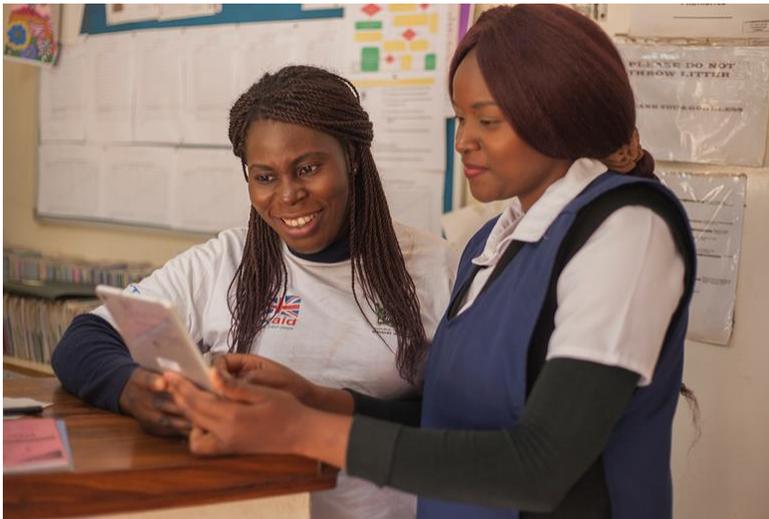
The BLN offers a range of services, whether countries require short-term, one-off, or deeper, long-term support. The BLN pairs mentors with government representatives and then carefully assess each country’s digital maturity, needs, and priorities to

meet a country where it is in its journey toward digital transformation. These services range from advisory, to capacity building, to knowledge management support. This may include help developing a change management strategy or peer pairing with other countries that are further along in their adoption of digital tools and systems.

“We’re a critical bridge for countries,” explained Mtenga, “offering peer connection to other digital experts and leaders, a regional hub for professional development, and a spectrum of services to ensure countries have the support, tools, and capacity needed to develop strong digital health systems.”

To learn more about the BLN and its mentorship program, visit bidinitiative.org.

Zambia launches innovative partnership to improve vaccine coverage



Earlier this year, members of the BID Initiative team in Zambia initiated a new, innovative partnership led by the Zambian Ministry of Health (MOH). The EPI Optimization (EPI-OPT) project aims to close the country’s immunization gap by improving every component of immunization service delivery. Under this project, the Government of Zambia leads a consortium of partners including PATH, the Center for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ), the Churches Health Association of Zambia (CHAZ), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). EPI-OPT will combine efforts to systematically advance four key pillars

of immunization service delivery and improve immunization coverage rates and data accuracy by strengthening:

- EPI manager knowledge and health care worker skillsets.
- Supply chains and logistics performance.
- Data quality and EPI monitoring.
- Demand for immunization services.

The BID Initiative has worked with the MOH since 2014 to address data management challenges with the rollout of the [Zambia Electronic Immunization Registry \(ZEIR\)](#). BID is working with the government of Zambia and EPI-OPT partners to advance the four pillars as a single, integrated package. Activities range from mentoring health facilities on data, stock, and vaccine management, to the introduction of Logistimo, a supply chain management software already in use at a district and health facility level, to help health workers track vaccine stock. The MOH and its partners are also working to increase demand for immunization services through efforts to integrate ZEIR with Mobile Vaccination (mVacc), a community immunization platform with SMS reminders, to reduce defaulter rates and children lost to follow-up.

The EPI-OPT project, if successful, will demonstrate a comprehensive and effective model for immunization service delivery that is able to transform Zambia's health system. Progress from EPI-OPT will be evaluated with documented lessons learned and recommendations about how best to nationally scale the strategy currently underway across Southern Province.

**BID Learning Network and partners
advocate for greater connection at
sixth annual Global Digital Health
Forum**



The BID Initiative team, along with other members of PATH's Center for Data and Digital Excellence, joined colleagues and collaborators from around the world for the [2019 Global Digital Health Forum](#) between December 9 and 11. This year's Forum—Celebrating Innovation and Supporting Proven Practices at Scale—balanced the need to scale systems that have been well vetted and shown to be effective with the urgent need to determine how emerging technologies and approaches can dramatically improve health outcomes.

BID was well represented at the Forum with a panel on peer learning networks, which Dr. Chilunga Puta, BID's Director of the BID Learning Network, participated in. The discussion, called "Networking the Networks: Key Enablers of Digital Principles," included digital health practitioners and members of a range of global, regional, and national networks, including the Global Digital Health Network, the African Alliance of Digital Health Networks, and the Asia eHealth Information Network, among others.

"As the Forum has grown and changed over the years, it's a fantastic privilege and opportunity to share this space with so many global colleagues," said Dr. Puta. "The BLN has many learnings to share from our experience in Tanzania and Zambia, but more so the Forum is a space to learn from our peers. To truly grow the digital health field and to ensure that digital technologies achieve their full potential, we must exchange learnings and best practices so we encourage the growth of an active community of practice in Africa, and avoid duplicating efforts or reinventing the wheel."

Despite the emergence of new and proven digital health technologies, there are still significant challenges to sharing information on new tools, evidence, and best practices. The discussion centered on approaches to knowledge management and advocated for more investments to connect the many networks represented at the Forum.

“We’re stronger when we work together,” said Dr. Puta. “I believe we can have a multiplier effect when we pool the collective knowledge and talent of the networks represented here today.”

Tanzania launches new national Digital Health Strategy, laying groundwork for next five years of digital development



In November, Tanzania cemented its digital leadership and ushered in the next five years of digital development with the launch of its [new national Digital Health Strategy \(2019–2024\)](#). This significant milestone was a part of the [Data Use Partnership \(DUP\), an initiative led by the government of Tanzania](#) with support from PATH that applies a sustainable, holistic approach to digitalizing the country’s health system and builds on the progress made by the BID Initiative in Tanzania. While BID focused on using immunization as a proof point for the importance of improving data quality and use to strengthen overall health, DUP addresses the full health sector and positions Tanzania as a global leader in digital health.

Digital health strategies are a critical and relatively new tool for countries to present a consistent vision for digital and data use within their health sectors. Tanzania's new strategy will play an essential role in guiding the implementation of digital health initiatives, enabling a health system that is patient centric, data driven, and healthier as a result.

The new strategy is based on an assessment of Tanzania's current digital health landscape and its previous strategy (2015–2018). Based on that assessment, which revealed more than 160 digital health and health-related systems in Tanzania, the government drafted a strategy that reflects ten high-priority areas that will guide the next five years of digital innovation in the country. These priorities range from strengthening disease surveillance, reporting, and response, to the use of telehealth to build health worker capacity in a changing digital landscape, while providing specialized care to the country's most remote corners.

"With our new Digital Health Strategy, we will coordinate all partners and stakeholders," explained Tumaniel Macha, the Director of Monitoring and Evaluation for Tanzania's Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly, and Children. "We'll have one platform where we discuss, plan, and mobilize resources together to achieve better [health] outcomes."

The strategy also clearly lays out an implementation plan and develops several governing structures that will oversee activities. These range from a National Digital Health Steering Committee composed of voting members, to health facility digital health committees that will coordinate activities, provide mentorship, and create awareness about digital health.

IN THIS ISSUE

[Letter from the director](#)

[BID Learning Network refreshes mentorship approach for countries interested in adopting digital solutions](#)

[Zambia launches innovative partnership to improve vaccine coverage](#)

[BID Learning Network and partners advocate for greater connection at sixth annual Global Digital Health Forum](#)

[Tanzania launches new national Digital Health Strategy, laying groundwork for next five years of digital development](#)



The BID Learning Network (BLN) is intended to be a platform where participants can contribute ideas, share experiences and actively participate, helping each other as they face similar challenges.

[JUMP IN. GET INVOLVED. →](#)

NOTEWORTHY BLOG POSTS

[Publication round-up: BID publishes new costing data, learnings, and best practices](#)

[New Vietnam case study highlights lessons learned around key partnerships with mobile network operators and electronic immunization registries](#)

[Launching the future of data](#)

[The key to better primary health care? Human-centered design](#)

NOTEWORTHY RESOURCES

[BID Learning Network graphic](#)

[The costs of developing, deploying and maintaining electronic immunisation registries in Tanzania and Zambia](#)

[The impact of an integrated electronic immunization registry and logistics management information system \(EIR-eLMIS\) on vaccine availability in three regions in Tanzania: A pre-post and time-series analysis](#)

[Three waves of data use among health workers: The experience of the Better Immunization Data Initiative in Tanzania and Zambia](#)

Led by PATH in partnership with the governments of Tanzania and Zambia, 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/Rebecca Richards-Diop, PATH/Chimwasu Njapawu, PATH/Christopher Neu, PATH/Trevor Snapp.

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