



BID INITIATIVE

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

SAVING LIVES THROUGH BETTER DATA

Strategies and Tactics from the BID Initiative

July 2020

Letter from the director

In recent months, the global community has seen the COVID-19 pandemic disrupt routine immunization services, rock fragile health systems, and upend medical supply chains. The pandemic has reinforced the importance of digital health technologies in maintaining essential health services and stopping COVID-19's spread. Many countries are accelerating their commitments to digital innovation and working to build back stronger and better prepared health systems for future outbreaks.

The BID Initiative and the BID Learning Network (BLN) remain committed to supporting countries to build affordable, scalable, and appropriate digital platforms to strengthen their routine health information systems. Countries, faced with the spread of COVID-19, have expressed a growing demand for digital health solutions and a recognition of the power of technology to make a difference in people's lives. In the past few weeks and months, we have adapted to meet this demand.

Within the BLN, more frequent virtual forums and webinars are convening health professionals to share how they are grappling with the current pandemic. Regionally, the BLN mentors continue helping countries determine the most appropriate digital and data solutions for their health systems. In Tanzania, health workers in select facilities will soon benefit from new features in the country's electronic immunization registry that will help them respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fighting COVID-19 will require accurate, real-time health data. I hope the global community takes this opportunity to commit to closing the digital divide. Follow our journey and commitment to digital transformation by finding us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and by subscribing to our blog.

Sincerely,



Laurie Werner
Global Director, the BID Initiative
PATH

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The power of peer learning: Using virtual platforms to connect



The BID Learning Network has taken on renewed importance amid the COVID-19 global pandemic. The strong partnerships,

virtual spaces, and camaraderie between country stakeholders are more critical than ever. Meetings may look different these days, but in the age of COVID-19, the BLN is providing an outlet for countries trying to navigate the current pandemic response while maintaining other health services.

“Peer learning networks enable health professionals, country governments, and digital health leaders to share their experiences across borders and health areas during this unprecedented moment in history,” said Dr. Chilunga Puta, Director of the BLN. “They’re a space for experimentation, learning, and a rapid feedback loop for countries working to minimize disruption to their routine immunization services from COVID-19.”

In light of the COVID-19 response, the BLN is enabling health professionals and national health departments to share information, data, approaches, and tools more rapidly. It’s also a venue for global funders, policymakers, and implementers to better understand how countries are experiencing the impact of COVID-19 to their health systems.

The appetite for this information has grown in recent months among BLN members. Since the pandemic began, the BLN has seen a twofold increase in the number of webinars hosted, compared to the same time frame last year. The average number of webinar participants has also grown by nearly 48 percent, and there’s been a significant increase in member discussions in the online forum. BLN activities range from [webinars about the use of electronic immunization registries for responding to COVID-19](#), to peer pairing between countries at varying stages in their digital journeys.

Read more about how the BLN is helping countries respond to COVID-19 [here](#).

BLN mentors help build the digital capacity of countries during COVID-19



Digital and data tools have taken on renewed importance during the pandemic and many countries are increasing their commitments to their routine health information systems as they acknowledge the role of real-time data for contact tracing, monitoring health service delivery, and understanding the epidemiological spread of the disease. To support their efforts, the BLN mentors are providing holistic, technology-agnostic guidance to a range of countries, including Mozambique, Malawi, and Kenya, among others.

Drawing on their experiences implementing electronic immunization registries (EIRs) in Tanzania and Zambia, BLN mentors provide a diverse set of skills around change management, the design and appropriate use of data quality and use interventions, and the scale-up and sustainability of solutions to help countries, no matter where they are in their digital journeys.

The mentors have collected and consolidated information on a variety of existing digital health systems to summarize the types of technologies available for routine health information. This includes information about the different features of each system, their strengths and limitations, and the countries where they are in use, among other summary details.

The mentors are committed to supporting and simplifying knowledge management by collecting and synthesizing global guidelines, lessons and best practices on digital and data solutions. By synthesizing and compiling this information with global guidance, digital readiness assessment tools, and other relevant resources, the mentors are able to work collaboratively with partners to help countries assess their digital contexts, align

with their current needs, and make more informed decisions about the right systems and tools for their health systems.

Using digital tools to accelerate progress in the face of a global pandemic



As the pandemic erupted across the globe, we have seen a marked decrease in routine immunization coverage. The BID Initiative is building on its legacy of EIRs in both Tanzania and Zambia to help the ministries of health respond to COVID-19 and prevent additional outbreaks from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Spreading messages of health promotion

Many EIRs, such as the Tanzania Immunization Registry (TImR), include contact information and messaging features for patients' caregivers. With more than 253,000 contacts in TImR, the system allows for direct communication to caregivers. As the global community develops a greater understanding of COVID-19—including its transmission patterns, full range of symptoms, and treatment options—health workers have the ability to share messages of health promotion with patients.

Providing peer support and messaging for health workers

Under the BID Initiative, health workers have [long used WhatsApp groups for peer support](#) and to stay in contact with neighboring health facilities. The need to stay connected has become even more critical under COVID-19. Messaging features

offer a lifeline between health facilities triaging supplies and patient services under a strained health system.

Strengthening immunization scheduling

One of the greatest challenges of the pandemic is the unprecedented strain it places on health systems. In Tanzania, BID is working to develop and pilot a new scheduling feature in TImR that will help schedule individual children for immunizations at specific dates and times to comply with guidance on social distancing. Messaging features and TImR's data visualizations can project patient volumes and help health workers better plan for upcoming immunization clinics. In Zambia, the process of integrating the Zambia Electronic Immunization Registry (ZEIR) and mVacc, a community-based app, is underway to enhance—among other things—scheduling and reminders for both caretakers and community health workers about the children that are due or overdue for vaccines.

Using EIR data to measure health trends and plan for routine immunization services



The EIRs introduced under the BID Initiative in Tanzania and Zambia have now been scaled to ten regions in Tanzania and one full province in Zambia. More than a million children have been entered into both the Tanzania Immunization Registry and the Zambia Electronic Immunization Registry. Each of those data points has unlocked new possibilities for future analyses and digital capabilities.

EIRs unlock the power of individual-level data that can be used to analyze and explain trends or patterns in health service delivery. Using EIR data from Tanzania and Zambia, the team will be answering priority questions about the implementation, effectiveness, costs, and impact associated with EIRs. The analyses are based on an initial landscape conducted with global stakeholders, implementing partners, ministry of health representatives, and Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) managers that helped to establish the research agenda.

“This is an exciting opportunity to test some of our hypotheses about immunization and service delivery trends,” explained Emily Carnahan, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Manager at PATH. “Our analyses will be a direct response to the priority research areas outlined by country and global stakeholders.”

Analyses will focus on population movement between health facilities, continuous quality improvement, and missed opportunities for vaccination, among other areas. The team will also be undertaking several COVID-19-related analyses. The results will be discussed with the Tanzania and Zambia EPI teams to collaboratively learn from the data insights, and will be shared with a wider audience to support the global learning agenda around EIRs.

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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

[BLN offers virtual platform for peer learning as countries square off against COVID-19](#)

[Maintaining commitment to immunization in Africa](#)

[through COVID-19 and beyond](#)

[3 ways immunization data tools are flexing to fight COVID-19 in Africa](#)

[Countries gather in Lusaka for BID Learning Network meeting to strengthen digital and data capacity](#)

NOTEWORTHY RESOURCES

[BLN Webinar: Triangulation for Improved Decision-Making in Immunization Programs](#)

[BLN Webinar: DHIS2 Tools for Immunization Programs | Apps and Dashboards](#)

[BLN/Gavi Data Quality and Use Collaborative Meeting Report: Lusaka, 3-5 March 2020](#)

[Vietnam's Scale-Up From a District-Level Pilot to a National-Scale Electronic Immunization Registry](#)

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.

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