



# INDEPTH Network

Better Health Information for Better Health Policy

## Resources Statement for INDEPTH

INDEPTH is an international network of longitudinal demographic research institutions that provides health and demographic data to enable developing countries set health priorities and policies based on the best available evidence, and to guide the effective use of tools, interventions and systems to ensure and monitor progress towards national goals.

Established in 1998, INDEPTH is one of the few truly global South-led organizations that is driving an agenda for strategically important health data.

### The Secretariat

INDEPTH is co-ordinated by a permanent executive body ('the secretariat') headed administratively by a full-time Executive Director appointed by and accountable to the Board of Trustees. The Executive Director is supported by capable full-time staff, comprising both scientific and non-scientific personnel working collectively as a team under the supervision of competent managers to carry out the day-to-day management of the affairs of the Network and to effectively and efficiently carry out the functions prescribed for the Secretariat.

The principal responsibilities of the Secretariat are to:

- Identify key health and social issues and questions that need to be investigated;
- Maintain funder relations and generate funding for network-level studies and evaluations;
- Efficiently co-ordinate and support the conduct of network studies and evaluations;
- Publish and disseminate results to impact health and social policy and practice;
- Promote HDSS and their capabilities;
- Position INDEPTH among regional and international institutions; and
- Organise meetings of the Board of Trustees and the Scientific Advisory Committee.

### Policy Engagement and Communications

The section is headed by a qualified and experienced manager whose principal responsibilities include:

- Supporting the Executive Director and Board of Trustees in identifying knowledge marketing objectives and implementing strategies to meet those objectives, in particular, assigning priorities and key performance indicators to communication and fundraising activities
- Acting as INDEPTH's senior public relations representative and assist the Network to continue improving its understanding of its global and regional priorities and associated funding opportunities

- Enhancing the positive image of the INDEPTH Network
- Facilitating the process of translating, packaging and communicating policy relevant cross-site research findings in support of improved health and social policy and practice

### Capacity Strengthening and Training

INDEPTH considers as important the aspect of strengthening capacity for health research in LMICs. Hence there is a section devoted to this and is headed by a professional with a doctorate degree in demography. The principal responsibilities of this section include:

- Guide the work of INDEPTH on training and capacity strengthening.
- Focus on issues related to strengthening data collection, data management and data analysis at INDEPTH members.
- Assess and maintain a good overview of INDEPTH's evolving capacity strengthening and training needs.

### Scientific Research and Co-ordination

Research has been and will remain the primary activity of INDEPTH member HDSSs and INDEPTH as a whole in the next decade. INDEPTH members are very committed to using the Network as a vehicle for conducting comparative research. Over the last decade, the commitment and ability of INDEPTH Members to make their data available for comparative studies has strengthened considerably. This has been demonstrated by a majority of the HDSSs making comparable individual-level data on mortality and cause-specific mortality available for analysis. The opportunity created by the sharing of individual-level datasets builds on a body of comparative research achieved by the Network in the last decade. Currently, INDEPTH is co-ordinating the analysis of longitudinal individual-level datasets provided by 31 African and Asian member centres in the first comparative analysis of trends in all-cause mortality.

The Scientific Research and Co-ordination Section, headed by a qualified scientist with a PhD in demography with supervision by a Principal Scientist, is also mandated to initiate and actively promote multi-centre scientific research. In 2001-2002 for example, INDEPTH worked with 18 of its African and Asian member centres to undertake an analysis of all-cause mortality data. The first INDEPTH publication: *'Population and Health in the Developing World: Population, Health and Survival at INDEPTH Sites'* (INDEPTH Network, 2002) described the concepts and methods of HDSS and for the first time provided comparable information about several HDSSs including their populations' demographic and health characteristics, their directly-measured age-specific mortality rates and patterns of mortality.

Again in 2008, INDEPTH funded nine Asian centres to collect data on non-communicable diseases which were used in comparative analyses published as a special issue of Global Health Action: *'Risk Factors for Chronic non-communicable Diseases: The Burden in Asian INDEPTH Health and Demographic Surveillance System Centres'* (Global Health Action Supplement 1, 2009).

Other examples are the publication of an edited book: *'The Dynamics of Migration, Health and Livelihoods: INDEPTH Network Perspectives'* (Collinson et al., 2009) and an NIA/WHO-funded INDEPTH project which involved conducting SAGE surveys on adult health and aging in eight HDSSs in Africa and Asia resulting in the publication of a special issue in September 2010 with simultaneous release of a multi-centre dataset.

Data collected by INDEPTH members on chronic non-communicable diseases using the WHO-SAGE surveys are being documented in DDI3 format so that the data can be put online for open access. INDEPTH is also utilising its iSHARE infrastructure to facilitate documentation and data access.

- *Large Projects*

INDEPTH Effectiveness and Safety Studies of Anti-malarial Drugs in Africa (INESS) - The Secretariat also has the mandate and competence to coordinate activities of other large projects such as INESS. INESS is a US\$36,800,000 project involving 6 African member centres under the leadership of African researchers to carry out Phase IV trials to assess the effectiveness of new malaria treatments and its determinants in real life health systems in Africa and to evaluate their safety through comprehensive pharmacovigilance in an African health systems context.

Another such large project that was successfully managed from the Secretariat is the INDEPTH Malaria Clinical Trials Alliance (MCTA). MCTA was carried out between 2006 and 2010 with a US\$17,000,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Under MCTA, 10 member centres were supported over a four-year period to address clinical trials challenges by developing their facilities and capacity for the conduct of Good Clinical Practice (GCP) - compliant malaria drug and vaccine trials.

The full range of activities conducted by INDEPTH and details of the 42 member centres are described on the INDEPTH website: [www.indepth-network.org](http://www.indepth-network.org).

### Administration

The administrative set up of the Secretariat comprises a number of general and specialized sections each performing its functions under the leadership of the Executive Director with the assistance of the Administrative Manager. The Secretariat employs Administrative Assistants who provide the critical support needed to ensure that the necessary linkages are maintained among the various sections and departments. They also manage information filing and undertake compilation of background documentation on all the 40 member centres.

### Finance

The section is headed by a Senior Finance Manager who exercises overall oversight over this specialised department. The manager is supported by a team comprising a chartered senior accountant, an accountant who holds an MBA, and a finance officer. Typically, the section is professionally competent to manage the funds of the Secretariat such as disbursements, financial controls etc. Over the years the department has managed large sized funds as well

as small to medium sized pools of funds from multiple funders and in multiple currencies. On the average the department manages an annual budget of approximately US\$4M. Several donors have made substantial contributions over the years to INDEPTH. The initial set up funding was provided by the Rockefeller Foundation. Additional funding has since been received from The Wellcome Trust, Sida/Research Cooperation, the World Bank, the Gates Foundation, IDRC, DANIDA, NIA/WHO, Rockefeller Foundation, Save the Children UK, European Commission, Hewlett Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, among others.

### General Projects and IT

To assist new and established centres to quickly gain efficiency, INDEPTH has produced a Resource Kit that provides guidance on conducting demographic surveillance. Topics covered include administration, financial management and staff recruitment, ethics and community engagement, data collection in baseline and update rounds, data security, and quality control.

The General Projects section performs a combined role of monitoring and ensuring adherence to the standards prescribed in the various INDEPTH tools, kits and protocols as well as providing IT support to member centers.

Skilled and qualified personnel of the section are on hand to provide trouble shooting and advisory services to all member centres as and when needed.

### Grants Management

This section is headed by an experienced manager with an MBA. She efficiently manages all grants to INDEPTH and sub-grants that are awarded by INDEPTH to our member centres and other research partners. The grants manager is equipped with skills in managing various funder requirements and ensures that reports to and from INDEPTH are standard and on time.

### Governance Structure

INDEPTH has a Board of Trustees whose primary role is to provide oversight and accountability for the activities of the Secretariat and the network as a whole. It consists of a total of ten members: six elected members representing the network members and selected by them; two appointed members selected by the elected members to reflect donor perspectives; the Chair of the SAC; and the Executive Director as an *ex-officio* member. The Board elects its Chair from among the Board members, and meets on a bi-annual basis. The strength of the INDEPTH Board lies in the caliber of its members all of whom are at any given time highly respectable scientists with years of research experience.

There is a Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) consisting of 15 members selected on their personal merits. It advises the INDEPTH secretariat on matters relating to the scientific activities of the network thereby assisting it to maintain its focus on health, population and social issues and areas of greatest potential impact. It is the SAC's responsibility to ensure that the highest scientific standards for network activities are upheld. In addition the SAC

facilitates linkages and communication between INDEPTH and related agencies, research bodies, networks, donors and key scientific stakeholders.

### INDEPTH Scientific Conference and Annual General Meeting

INDEPTH's annual Scientific Conference and General Meeting is a forum for members to share experiences in demographic surveillance through by scientific papers that are presented. It also serves as a forum for discussion organizational matters of the network, electing officers, reviewing reports for the Board and Executive Director and gauging progress of work at the secretariat. Since it was instituted the secretariat has successfully held at least 10 such gatherings on a rotational basis. To date India, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and Burkina Faso have hosted these prestigious sessions.

### Previous and current support for research activities of INDEPTH member centres

INDEPTH has provided extensive support to researchers at HDSSs. The support of the Network has assisted centres to obtain funding for continued research activities. To assist new and established centres, INDEPTH has produced a Resource Kit that provides guidance on conducting demographic surveillance. Topics covered include administration, financial management and staff recruitment, ethics and community engagement, data collection in baseline and update rounds, data security, and quality control. INDEPTH also offers analytical support to centres. INDEPTH has also taken a lead in the training and development of different cadres of centre staff from young scientists (analytical and scientific writing workshops), operational managers (administrative and financial management and reporting systems) and database managers (data management, extraction of analytical datasets and preparation of event history files) to centre leaders (strategic planning).

### Concluding Statement

Overall INDEPTH has played a critical role in raising the profile of the research outputs of its member centres. When INDEPTH started, funders, governments and international agencies had limited knowledge about HDSS methodology, the types of data available, and the unique potential of HDSSs for critical, policy-relevant observational and intervention research. INDEPTH has been very successful in raising the profile of the work of member centres through its activities, participation in conferences, international research and policy forums, journal publications, and INDEPTH print and online materials and information.

It is important to note that research support has not been limited to the examples given here. The capacity for the INDEPTH Secretariat itself to initiate and deliver new multi-centre research has been limited due to the small number of scientists available in-house. Given this, the outputs of INDEPTH have been considerable, and have been achieved through a mixture of the Secretariat's research staff doing specific research studies themselves, but mainly through their facilitation and co-ordination of work done by working groups.