



Téléphone Central/Exchange: +41 (0) 22 791 2111
Direct: +41 (0) 22 791 3353
Email:

In reply please refer to: S5-370-7
Prière de rappeler la référence:

Your reference:
Votre référence:

Dr Julio Frenk
Dean
Harvard School of Public Health
Kresge Building, Room 1005
677 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
United States

Prof Anne Mills
Head
Public Health and Policy
London School of Hygiene and Tropical
Medicine
Room 37a, Keppel Street
London, WC1E 7HT
United Kingdom

Dr Anders Nordstrom
Director General and Head
Swedish International Development
Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
Valhallavägen 199
105 25 Stockholm
Sweden

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Dear Julio, Anne and Anders,

As the Task Force on Innovative International Financing for Health Systems approaches the conclusion of its mandate, I would like to, as Chair of the Board of the Health Metrics Network (HMN), bring your attention to the importance of underscoring the results focus of this important work and its vital link with competent, country-owned health information systems.

It is evident that if there is to be support for innovative financing for health, a strong focus on achieving results will be essential. Furthermore, this has to be accompanied with visible investments in country systems that increase the predictability of availability of reliable information. There is a clear danger that, as so often in the past, more donor-led systems will consequently be imposed in order to help deliver the necessary information. Since its foundation in 2005, HMN has worked with low and lower middle income countries to encourage the development of national, regional and district information systems to improve the availability and use of health information for decision-making. A strong health information system is fundamental to a robust health system, and can drive reform across the health sector. Our work at HMN reinforces the message of the Accra Agenda for Action that monitoring should be based instead on information generated by country-owned systems.

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The HMN Framework, endorsed by the World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 2007, has been used by some eighty countries to assess their own health information systems in a standard fashion, and its use is formally endorsed by the Global Fund for access to its health systems window. Our experience suggests that better-organized and better-resourced health information systems are both necessary and achievable. The more that competent, locally-owned health information systems are used as a basis for international monitoring, the more their quality is likely to improve.

To that end, we would like to persuade the Task Force to:

- 1) Reinforce the focus on results;
- 2) Urge the importance of coordinated investments when building the competent, locally-owned health information systems needed to generate the information for monitoring progress;
- 3) Endorse existing international, standards-based approaches to doing this, including the Framework developed by the Health Metrics Network, and call for international support for diversifying the tool-kit of such approaches.

The HMN provides a model of how the international community can align and cooperate to this end. The work of the Network is currently being evaluated, and we stand ready to not only adapt our future program in light of the results of this evaluation, but also to the demand from developing countries and from international initiatives such as the Task Force. HMN's ultimate goal is to improve the health of citizens in lower income countries by putting the best knowledge in the hands of decision makers so that they can allocate resources in the most effective way possible.

If it would be useful, Dr Sally Stansfield, Executive Secretary of the Health Metrics Network, and I would be happy to elaborate the scope for HMN to play a larger role in helping to develop the health information systems that are central to sustainable progress.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Richard Manning
Chair of the Board
Health Metrics Network