

The Rationale for Investing in Routine Health Information in Developing Countries

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Introduction to the Theme

- The Downside of Information
- The Upside of Information
- Some Basic Principles
- Investment Goal
- Investment Objectives
- Types of Investment
- Working Environment

The Downside of Information

- High opportunity cost
- “piles of paper”
- Health data systems
- An end in itself
- Systems are “push” and not “pull”
- Information hide and seek

The Upside of Information

- Provides the basis for sound decision-making and policy
- Allows managers to monitor the effectiveness of interventions
- Early warning systems to guide response
- Facilitates the effective and appropriate use of resources (financial and human)

Some Basic Principles

- Health information must be used to have value
- There must be a demand (pull) and not merely a supply (push)
- Health information is a tool for the practitioner to use in the promotion of health

More Principles

- Health information is as much a behavioral issue as a technical issue (the culture of information)
- Improving health information is not solely a technology fix
- What is appropriate to one setting may not be appropriate to another

Investment Goal

The improvement in the
population's health status

Investment Objectives

- More efficient use of resources
- Informed decision making
- More effective policies
- Increased intervention effectiveness
- Improved safety and quality
- More timely response

Types of Investment

- Capacity building
- Technical assistance
- Infrastructure (buildings, equipment)
- Technology

Environment

- Level of development
- Health system organization (centralized, decentralized or disintegrated)
- Level of intervention (national, district, facility, community)
- Culture of information

Conclusion

- Need: A Strategy of Information
- Don't Need: More collections of information activities