

8 global health agencies call for better global health data

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As the Prince Mahidol Award Conference on Health Information kicks off in Bangkok, Thailand, and the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, gets underway this week, eight global health agencies call for a concerted global effort to collect better health data.

"Recent substantial increases in international attention to health have been accompanied by demands for statistics that accurately track health progress and performance, evaluate the impact of health programs and policies, and increase accountability at country and global levels," say the authors in an essay in this week's [PLoS Medicine](#).

The ability to respond to such demands, they say, is constrained by limited data availability, quality, and use: "Many developing countries have limitations that hamper the production of data of sufficient quality and timeliness to permit regular tracking of progress made in scaling up and strengthening health systems."

In their essay, the eight agencies propose four global actions to strengthen the collection, analysis, synthesis, validation, and use of [health data](#) in countries. They lay out their commitments to pursuing each of these goals:

- Increase levels and efficiency of investments in health information

- Develop a common data architecture
- Strengthen performance monitoring and evaluation
- Increase data access and use.

The eight agencies supporting the proposal are the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI); the UN Population Fund (UNFPA); the World Bank's Human Development Network; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS/UNAIDS; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); and the Global Health Program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

More information: Chan M, Kazatchkine M, Lob-Levyt J, Obaid T, Schweizer J, et al. (2010) Meeting the Demand for Results and Accountability: A Call for Action on Health Data from Eight Global Health Agencies. PLoS Med 7(1):e1000223.
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