

## Health Metrics Network: An emerging global partnership for health information

The Millennium Development Goals have stimulated awareness of the importance of data. They have also highlighted the weakness of existing information systems in many countries. Nowhere is this more apparent than in health. Sound information is essential for achieving the health-related goals, yet rarely available. Everywhere there are too many uncoordinated demands for information, too much useless data and too few solid facts.

The Health Metrics Network, an emerging global partnership funded largely by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, seeks to remedy this situation. It will convene the health and statistical constituencies at global, regional and country levels, including international agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors, foundations and technical experts, to advance the proposition that meeting the health challenges of the 21st century requires building stronger health information systems.

Its aim is to use the growing demand by countries and development partners for good

information to accelerate the building of national level health information systems that serve global, national and subnational needs. Countries themselves will lead this effort, forging consensus among stakeholders around plans for strengthening or reforming health information systems. Implementing the plans will help countries respond to the challenge of monitoring progress towards national and international goals and targets, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The Health Metrics Network will be made up of a board, a small secretariat initially hosted by the World Health Organization, and technical task forces that will provide the impetus for addressing key health metrics challenges. Board members will include representatives of developing countries, multilateral and bilateral agencies, foundations and technical experts. The network's launch is planned for the first half of 2004, following the first meeting of the board.