

**An International Network for the Continuous Demographic
Evaluation of Populations and Their Health in Developing Countries**

INDEPTH NETWORK

Strategic Plan

2010-2014



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategic Plan outlines the work of the International Network for the Demographic Evaluation of Populations and Their Health (INDEPTH) for 2010-2014. It is informed by assessments of the Network's strengths, achievements and goals as well as external development priorities, scientific advances and the changing funding environment. Our mission remains unchanged: to harness the collective potential of the world's community-based longitudinal demographic surveillance initiatives in resource constrained countries to provide a better, empirical understanding of health and social issues, and to apply this understanding to alleviate major health and social problems. We will continue to pursue this mission through interlocking programs in research, policy engagement and research capacity strengthening.

Building on a two-day strategic planning retreat conducted in June 2009, discussions with and polling of the range of internal and external stakeholders, as well as an external review funded by one of our anchor donors, our strategy for 2010-2014 will focus on the three core business lines of the INDEPTH Network:

Research

- Perform research to quantify and understand the demographic and health transition in the developing world through longitudinal population-based demographic and cause of death data, and discover what works and at what cost by conducting impact evaluations.
- Develop standardized tools and approaches to capture, share and compare data across members
- Play a quality assurance role to strengthen the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the research produced by member institutions as well as of the network

Policy engagement and communication

- Tailor research outputs as appropriate for different audiences and stakeholders to reduce the critical gap between research findings and action

Capacity strengthening

- Grow the talent of scientists in the INDEPTH member institutions and enhance members' capacity to conduct world-class research

To execute on these core areas, our organizational and management strategy for the next five years will focus on four priorities:

- Working as one network
- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Working Groups
- Unlocking funding for INDEPTH operating organs
- Managing growth

We have articulated our network Theory of Change to link our activities and outputs to health outcomes and impact. To track our collective performance we will develop SMART indicators at a network level as well as at the level of each network organ (Full and Associate Members, Working Groups and Interest Groups, Secretariat, Scientific Advisory Committee, and the Board of Trustees).

Figure 1: Summary of INDEPTH's Strategy 2010-2014

Priorities	Strategy 2010-2014
Core business lines	
Research	<p><i>Perform research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance membership requirements regarding submission of basic dataset Recruit Deputy Director to be single contact for multi-site collaborations <p><i>Develop standardized tools and approaches to capture, share and compare data across members</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support creation of metadata Increase cross-site comparability of analytic variables Support data sharing with the international scientific community including iShare and the INDEPTH Data System <p><i>Play a quality assurance role</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Data Quality Inspection Team Provide a Resource Center for data assurance on website
Policy engagement and communication	<p><i>Tailor research outputs as appropriate for different audiences and stakeholders to reduce the critical gap between research findings and action</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fill Communications vacancy Support Working Groups to tailor output for publication Organize forums, meetings and briefings with key stakeholders Participate in international conferences and agenda-setting meetings Strengthen collaboration with national and regional entities focused on population and health Assess existing policies and the policymaking environment, and make relevant recommendations
Capacity strengthening	<p><i>Grow the talent of scientists in Member Institutions as well as enhance the capacity of the institutions to conduct world class research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and fill Capacity Strengthening Coordinator role Develop a strategic capacity building program
Organizational and management strategy	
Working as one network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve communications between members and INDEPTH organs Leverage and adopt social networking applications More frequent face to face meetings of Working Groups Encourage and where possible support more direct exchange visits
Improving efficiency and effectiveness of the network	<p><i>Focus on Working Groups as the primary vehicle for conducting multi-site research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen guidelines for WG leaders and members (briefings accompanying data requests, project management support) Resources for face-to-face meetings for data analysis and write ups Capacity support to WGs e.g., research fellows, admin etc Regular evaluation and tracking of WG progress
Unlocking funding for INDEPTH operating organs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants for the Network organs including Secretariat, SAC, Board Research grants for multi-site collaborations and Working Groups Sponsorship for events e.g. AGM Fee for service (training, AGM participation, field opportunities for students) Membership/subscription fee for members
Managing growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus not so much on further expansion as on pursuing key activities that address medium-term objectives and help us to work more as one network.
Measure performance against Theory of Change	

INTRODUCTION

VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

Vision: “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 cost-effective use of tools, interventions and systems to ensure and monitor progress towards national goals.”

INDEPTH’s Mission: “To harness the collective potential of the world’s community-based longitudinal demographic surveillance initiatives in low and middle income countries to provide a better understanding of health and social issues, and to encourage the application of this understanding to alleviate major health and social problems.”

Objectives

1. To initiate and facilitate cross-site, longitudinal health and social studies and impact assessments in populations in low and middle income countries.
2. To disseminate study findings to INDEPTH stakeholders, influencing policy and practice.
3. To support capacity-strengthening and cross-site collaborations among INDEPTH member institutions
4. To help mobilize resources for multi-site health and social research projects in the developing world and especially in Africa and Asia.

Organizational Values

INDEPTH believes that better health information can lead to better health policy. All INDEPTH members have an unwavering commitment to:

- Research quality and evidence
- Knowledge and experience sharing
- Investing in the next generation of developing country scientists
- Accountability and transparency
- Team work and togetherness
- Acting as one unified entity.

ADDED VALUE OF INDEPTH

INDEPTH connects individual Health and Demographic Surveillance Sites (HDSS) to global health actors and policy-makers. We offer the international community high-quality research capacity for multi-site studies that make use of longitudinal population-based demographic datasets from INDEPTH member institutions. We support scientists at the individual member institutions to enhance the quality of their output through the exchange of experiences, expertise and data. We magnify the visibility and influence of the research findings and our member institutions by creating linkages with a broad range of relevant stakeholders. Our added value varies by type of stakeholder. Here we articulate the distinctions between our value proposition to members, policy-makers and health research funders.

Added value to members

- INDEPTH provides capacity building and technical advice to Health and Demographic Surveillance Sites
- INDEPTH promotes HDSS capability to regional and international institutions
- INDEPTH attracts funding for multi-site studies and evaluations and maintains funder relations
- INDEPTH co-ordinates and supports the conduct of multi-site studies in a transparent manner
- INDEPTH publishes and disseminates results of multi-site studies
- INDEPTH provides a forum for scientists from member institutions to interact with peers at other member institutions as well as with global health actors and policy-makers

Added value to policy-makers

- INDEPTH is a network of 37 high quality HDSS sites in 19 countries that offers policy-makers access to up-to-date health and demographic information and trends from a variety of contexts
- HDSS continuously monitor all individuals in a given area for births and deaths, causes of death, in- and out-migrations. This provides policy-makers with an accurate and detailed view of population demographics that is particularly important in contexts where national statistics are either lacking or weak
- This monitoring system also provides a platform for the design and evaluation of a wide range of social, economic, behavioral and health interventions and research studies

Added value to health research funders

- INDEPTH is an international platform that connects global health actors to up to 37 high quality HDSS sites in 19 countries
- The Network offers the research and development community a one stop shop for high quality health research capacity for multi-site studies that have longitudinal population-based demographic datasets
- The Secretariat offers a coordination function for multi-site initiatives and a single point of contact for research sponsors

THEORY OF CHANGE

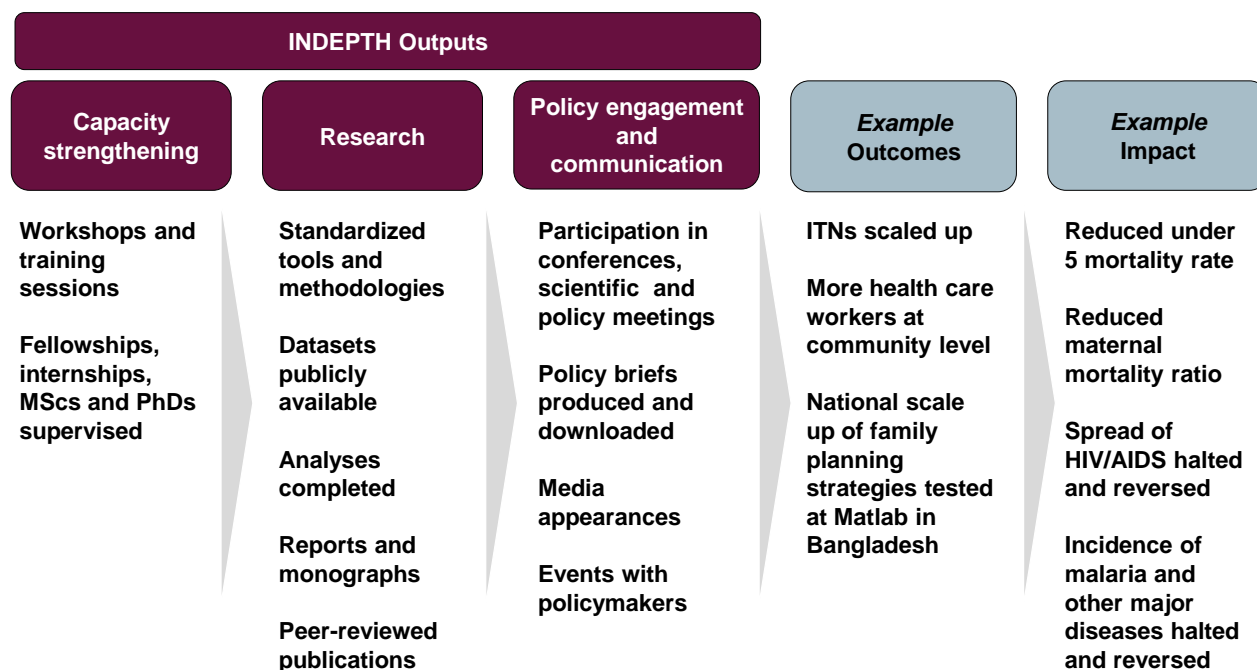
Each year, millions of people around the world die prematurely from preventable acute and chronic diseases. A contributing factor to this high burden of disease is the lack of a reliable information base to support the identification, assessment and cost-effective prevention and treatment of disease and associated social issues in low and middle income countries. INDEPTH with its independent HDSS members provides a unique system for developing that reliable information base. However it is not enough to simply develop the information base when we know that much available evidence is not being used by policy-makers. The next phase of INDEPTH's development will therefore not only focus on higher quality research outputs, but also foster the use of the evidence we generate.

A few recent highlights of recognized scientific and policy findings that have been developed, tested and demonstrated by HDSS members are:

- The effectiveness of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) in reducing the incidence of malaria mortality
- The impact of deploying locally-based health-care workers on health outcomes in a community
- Family planning strategies tested at the Matlab site have been adopted nationwide in Bangladesh

While the outcomes INDEPTH seeks to support will not be directly attributable to INDEPTH's efforts alone, it is worth articulating the path through which INDEPTH's data and research helps alleviate key health and social problems. This Strategic Plan takes us to 2014, the eve of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). INDEPTH was founded in 1998 and incorporated in 2002, the period when the MDGs were adopted. The health-related MDGs are therefore appropriate but not exhaustive benchmarks for the role and impact that INDEPTH seeks to achieve. As the demographic transition takes hold and the burden of disease changes, so will the health outcomes and impact INDEPTH seeks to achieve. This Theory of Change will therefore be dynamic and subject to changes in future periods.

Figure 2: INDEPTH Theory of Change



In the next five years, this overall Theory of Change will be decentralized to all organs of the network, allowing each to articulate clearly how its individual activities link to outcomes and impact in their target areas. Doing so will result not only in the ability to measure performance and progress, but will also support cohesion within the network where all stakeholders are aware of roles, responsibilities and expectations of each other. For Working Groups, this could mean a sharper definition of research question being tackled as well as outlining the pathway to policy change once conclusive evidence is gathered. For the Board, it might be clarifying which type of network investments (in time and resources) they prioritize and why. The Secretariat, as the custodian of the Network's Theory of Change, will facilitate and manage this process.

The global health community is increasingly recognizing the importance of evaluation, evidence collection and knowledge generation to complement the massive scale-up in global health investments seen over the past decade. Research is needed to improve the quality of decision making, enhance efficiency and build capacity for understanding why some programs work better than others. INDEPTH, by articulating how its activities can help bring about change, will be in a strong position to drive this agenda for health data as one of the few truly global South-led organizations.

SITUATION ASSESSMENT

INDEPTH is a network of health and demographic surveillance institutions based in the developing world that was set up by its members in 1998 to raise our research productivity by sharing experience and skills and undertaking multi-site research projects, as well as to create a platform for engagement beyond our individual HDSS institutions. This vision has proved relevant and INDEPTH has made effective progress toward these goals over the past decade. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to increase the quantity and quality of the research based on the HDSS data. We will therefore be making some changes to INDEPTH's structures and working procedures to enable us to function more efficiently and to increase our scientific and policy impact.

This is the third strategic plan of the INDEPTH Network and it covers the five years from January 2010 to December 2014. In the first decade of our existence we have established ourselves as a credible Southern-led network that is able to coordinate an extensive program of cross-site research and capacity development activities and to manage large budgets. We have benefited from strong leadership and have been largely successful at managing tensions that inevitably arise within any network that controls substantial funds by operating in a transparent, accountable and democratic manner. We have helped to legitimize HDSS as a source of health research and information. Yet while our research capacity and budgets have grown, our policy engagement and capacity building budgets have not kept similar pace.

Our network is made up of five operating organs:

- i) Full and Associate Members
- ii) Working Groups and Interest Groups
- iii) Secretariat
- iv) Scientific Advisory Committee
- v) Board of Trustees

Each organ has its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which are summarized below.

i) Full and Associate Members

Each INDEPTH member institution is independently run and managed by its local team of scientists. Over the last decade, we have made significant progress in growing this network by attracting members of different sizes and different strengths from across the developing world.

For the next five years, we will focus on enabling this membership to become a truly unified entity, facilitated through knowledge and expertise sharing, as well as developing common approaches and standardizing data to allow for easy aggregation and comparison. The primary focus of our strategy for the next five years will therefore be to focus on improving the **quality of HDSS research and analysis** generated by our members through standardized tools and approaches to capture, share and compare data across members, as well as through a strategic **capacity-strengthening** program that grows talent and is embedded in a general strategy of knowledge and expertise sharing.

To do so, we will enhance our membership requirements to include core elements such as submission of a basic data (specific elements to be confirmed). These are summarized in Figure 2 below. For those members that are not able to fulfill these criteria, dedicated support will be provided as the network is fundamentally strengthened by having more and more full members.

Figure 3: Two tiers of INDEPTH membership with different requirements and benefits

	Full INDEPTH Members	Associate INDEPTH Members
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing and pooling of core data (specific elements TBD) • Leverage own expertise, capacity and capability to strengthen other INDEPTH members and associate members • Commitment to supporting the further strengthening of the Network and its member institutions • Acknowledge INDEPTH's contributions to own work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay annual subscription fee • Commitment to supporting the further strengthening of the Network including capacity, expertise and data sharing where possible • If a HDSS site, active movement towards becoming a full member • Acknowledge INDEPTH's contributions to own work
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority in scientific and capacity building activities (including management capacity building) • Can anchor a Working Group • Subsidized (full or partial) AGM attendance • Have voting rights at AGM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in scientific and capacity building activities if space allows • Participate in Working Groups but there must be at least one full member in each WG to anchor it • Attend AGM but at own cost/only partly subsidized

ii) Working Groups and Interest Groups

Working Groups (WGs) are the primary vehicle through which the Network performs its scientific activities. Each WG evolves from being an Interest Group when it focuses on a specific research topic or project that has been identified as of priority interest and on which a number of members wish to work collaboratively. Working Group members are drawn from members and associate members, the Secretariat and the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Collaborating with others in addition to one's "day job" is always challenging, and interactions with members have at times been difficult. Site participants are typically not directly compensated for their contributions to a Working Group. However, the benefits accrued can be significant, from specific training and learning opportunities, through being part of exciting research that is beyond one's typical domain, to publications in top tier journals.

For the next half decade, particular effort will be made to **improve the effectiveness and efficiency** of these interactions. Where possible and necessary, guidelines, training, funding and administrative support through satellite secretariats will be provided to WGs to boost their productivity.

iii) Secretariat

INDEPTH is coordinated by a permanent executive body (“the Secretariat”) which is headed by a full-time Executive Director appointed by and accountable to the Board of Trustees. Our members rate the Secretariat most highly for its capacity development activities, and least highly for dissemination of the Network’s research findings to scientific audiences and policy-makers. A major focus of the Network’s strategy for the next five years will therefore be to strengthen our **policy engagement and communication** function. To do this, the Secretariat will need the support of all the other INDEPTH organs as it seeks to increase the policy influence of the Network and its constituents.

The frequency of member interaction with other member members is also lower than desired, particularly members that are outside one’s own geographic region. For most, Annual General Meeting becomes the only time they meet and share with other members. This pattern severely limits the sharing of knowledge and capabilities across the network. The Secretariat will therefore make its top organizational priority **working as one network**, rather than clustering by geography. To enable the Secretariat to increase capacity sustainably we need to seek long-term **funding**, not only for multi-site research projects but also for capacity building and communication. As we focus on strengthening our weakest members and building a more compact community of members, we will **manage growth** more consciously, targeting new members who fill a strategic gap and meet a high bar in terms of research quality and capacity.

iv) Scientific Advisory Committee

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) assists in maintaining the focus of INDEPTH on health, population and social issues and areas of greatest potential impact; encourages linkages between INDEPTH and related agencies, research bodies and networks; and helps maintain the highest scientific standard for INDEPTH studies. In addition, the SAC facilitates ongoing communication between INDEPTH and donors and key scientific stakeholders. The SAC consists of 15 members selected on their personal merits. Our focus over the next five years will therefore be to further leverage the SAC in keeping a finger on the pulse of global research trends as well as to engage with new networks of potential collaborators and funders.

v) Board of Trustees

The Board consists of ten total members: six elected members representing the 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 all Board members, and meets on a semi-annual basis. Its primary role is to provide oversight and accountability for the activities of the Secretariat and network as a whole. The Board of Trustees is also responsible for appointing the Executive Director.

STRATEGY

RESEARCH

Perform research to quantify and understand the demographic and health transition in the developing world through longitudinal population-based demographic and cause-of-death data, and discover what works and at what cost by conducting impact evaluations.

INDEPTH's HDSS members have a comparative advantage in investigating research questions using multi-site, population-based longitudinal and/or verbal autopsy data. The types of research question for which HDSS data are particularly powerful include:

1. Comparative demographic analyses, particularly those on topics about which Demographic and Health Survey and similar single-round retrospective surveys provide limited data, for example adult mortality.
2. Monitoring of cause-specific mortality trends, together with all other research that uses mortality from a specific cause or group of causes as its outcome variable.
3. Research that requires longitudinal data to sort out the ordering of events and hence potential direction of causality.
4. Research into interrelationships between various demographic statuses and events such as migration, child-bearing, health, residential arrangements, and mortality.
5. Cross-site observational research on the unintended positive and harmful impacts of existing health interventions that it would be unethical to investigate by means of experimental trials.
6. Interventions research that cannot be conducted on facility-based cohorts as it requires measurement of population-based outcomes.
7. Research that requires the identification of households that have been formerly linked by the co-residence of related members. E.g. inter-generational factors that requires the identification of parent child links during periods of co-residence, to follow children who have grown up and established their own households; research into the sequels of marital break-up or disruption due to mortality, where formerly co-resident family members can be followed into their new households.
8. Research that needs longitudinal data to validate survey instruments, or to develop methods for detecting and correcting reporting biases, for subsequent use in cross-sectional studies.

INDEPTH will campaign and work for fuller exploitation of members' data, but will not impose specific research topics on members. While not all research conducted by the members requires population-based longitudinal data, it does benefit from the established core infrastructure. As such, a push will be made to encourage funders for all projects funded through the INDEPTH Secretariat to contribute to the HDSS overhead funding.

As a supplementary strategy to the comparative studies pursued by Working Groups, INDEPTH will also look to commission a series of "Illustrative Analyses". This would entail an analyst working with one site's data producing a research paper on a strategically important topic demonstrating to other members what they can potentially achieve with such data. Backup documentation of how to produce the results will also be developed. Ideas for such analyses might come from Working Groups, or the Scientific Advisory

Committee, or be proposed to the Secretariat by individual researchers. The Network's recent volume on *Environmental Factors and Malaria Transmission Risk* is one such illustrative analysis.

INDEPTH will also seek to establish a timetabled series of updated documents that are produced on a regular basis to translate the research findings for a wider policy audience. One such product will be a "Burden of Disease Profile". Other titles will be developed in consultation with member members and the SAC, and could include mortality estimates and trends, and fertility estimates and trends.

Develop standardized tools and approaches to capture, share and compare data across members

INDEPTH exists to improve the amount, quality and impact of the research conducted by members. To do this, INDEPTH and the member sites need to collect high-quality health and demographic surveillance data, analyze these data to generate findings, and make standardized data series and datasets available to the wider scientific community. The independent evaluation noted that members are utilizing their data more effectively than a decade ago and credited INDEPTH with contributing to this both through our capacity-strengthening activities and by implementing cross-site studies. Nevertheless we are constantly seeking to increase the Network's scientific productivity.

During the next five years we will be focusing on an interrelated set of issues that are delaying the production of health statistics and preventing scientists elsewhere from maximizing the value of the data. These concern the creation of metadata, increasing the cross-site comparability of the analytic variables and supporting data sharing. INDEPTH members are already implementing standardized tools such as the Verbal Autopsy (VA) questionnaire and have published papers referring to the INDEPTH standardized VA tool. We will continue to encourage our members to use these standardized questionnaires.

INDEPTH is also taking the necessary steps to share HDSS data responsibly with the international scientific community by seeking funds to conduct quality control and check the feasibility and usefulness of our "iShare" project (in which six members have their data freely available on the web) and our INDEPTH Data System (IDS) project (which is seeking funds to prepare many more members not only to share data but also to improve the quality of data collected).

We established a data administration committee in October 2009 to oversee the Network's efforts to develop policies on these matters; to improve its capabilities and IT systems; and to establish a data repository.

Play a quality assurance role to strengthen the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the research produced by member institutions as well as of the network

INDEPTH will invest resources to assure high quality data are generated by the members. Starting with the minimum data set condition for full membership, the Secretariat is establishing in consultation with the Scientific Advisory Committee and other stakeholders, a data quality inspection team. As a first step, the Secretariat is providing on its website a resource centre for data assurance. The Resource Centre will contain a pool of resources including:

- Plausibility checks for HDSS data
- A list of common errors
- INDEPTH Starter Kit for the establishment of new HDSS members
- INDEPTH Resource Kit for old members to improve their operations and output.

POLICY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Tailor research outputs as appropriate for different audiences and stakeholders to reduce the critical gap between research findings and action

INDEPTH has raised the profile of Health and Demographic Surveillance Sites as a source of health research and information, but more can be done to facilitate translation of findings into policy and practice. We need to improve our reputation and that of our members as effective suppliers of high-quality health statistics that inform health policy and practice. We will put more effort into developing linkages with international agencies, scientific networks and associations whose mission aligns with ours¹. At the national level, the Network will do more to assist members build stronger relationships with stakeholders such as Ministries of Health, National Statistical Organizations and local universities.

Our methods for enhancing policy dialogue and communicating new knowledge to potential end users will include:

- Encouraging and supporting Working Groups to publish research findings and policy analyses in varied formats, including peer-reviewed articles in international journals, working papers and research reports, policy briefs, fact sheets, media releases and newspaper articles
- Organizing forums, meetings and briefings with key stakeholders
- Participating in international conferences and agenda-setting meetings
- Strengthening and collaborating with national and regional entities focused on population and health
- Assessing existing policies and the policymaking environment, and making relevant recommendations.

The goal is to maintain an ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders at all levels, to ensure that our work is known, understood and used by those who develop policies and programs.

Operationally, one of the immediate tasks will be to fill the Communications and External Relations Manager role in the Secretariat to help drive this agenda forward.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Grow the talent of scientists in Member Institutions as well as enhance the capacity of the institutions to conduct world-class research

So far INDEPTH has engaged in an extensive program of capacity strengthening among our members, primarily by conducting workshops to address specific and general deficiencies in data collection, management and analysis within the network. Beyond improving individual members, the goal has been to improve the general capacity of the Network to meet our objectives of conducting multi-site studies.

¹ These include COHRED, IUSSP, PAA, UAPS, INCLIN, DHS and NEPAD

The Secretariat will support these efforts more robustly. Operationally, this will include creating and filling the role of a Capacity Strengthening Coordinator who will be tasked with developing a strategic capacity building program based on short, mid and long term needs and vision for capacity within the Network. This program will be informed by the needs of members and the advice of the Board and the SAC. The program will then guide the annual schedule of long and short courses offered, help us collectively determine the funding priorities for capacity strengthening as well as fundraise for them.

There are also a significant number of other capacity strengthening programs beyond our own that could benefit members. The Coordinator will keep a log of these programs and encourage the members to apply.

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

WORKING AS ONE NETWORK

One of the main problems that networks in general face today is that they cease to operate as networks: members deal with the secretariat as a service provider, but do not deal with each other. This threatens the sustainability, as well as the effective fulfillment, of a network's roles. In some cases, networks actually compete for funding and policy influence with their members.

To avoid falling into these common traps, building a strong and compact network of members is a top priority for the period 2010-2014. In the terminology of the Civil Society Partnerships Program of the Overseas Development Institute², INDEPTH will focus on the following functions to increase inter-member networking:

- **Community building:** Promote and sustain the values and standards of the members
- **Facilitation:** Help members carry out their activities
- **Convening:** Bring together different people or groups of people
- **Investing / providing:** Offer a means to give members the resources they need to carry out their main activities
- **Filtering:** Decide what information is worth paying attention to and organize the significant amounts of information generated by and targeted at the community
- **Amplifying:** Help take little known or little understood ideas and make them more widely understood.

Networks are capable of carrying out one or more of these functions simultaneously (and many activities would fall under more than one category) but there are important trade-offs between them. Each function requires specific skills, resources and systems, and overlooking these trade-offs can drive networks away from their original roles.

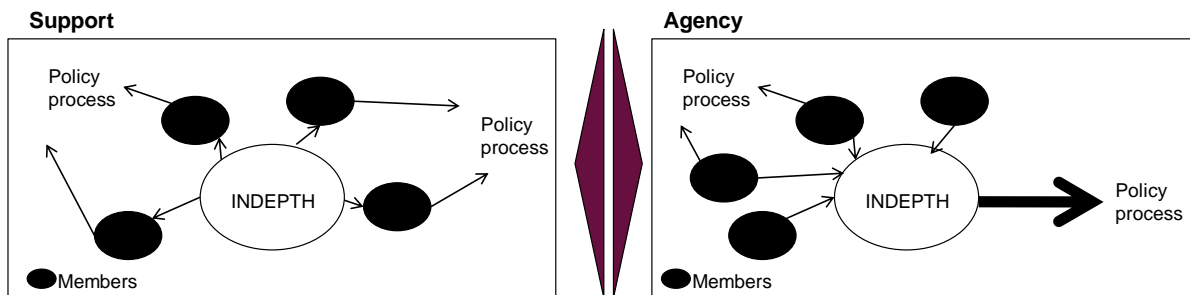
The role of the INDEPTH network as we are entering the new decade is shifting from a pure **support** role – supporting community development and learning among the members – to more of an **agency** role – amplifying the voice of our members on the global stage and convening policy-makers.

² To use ODI's terminology http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Projects/PPA0103/Link_function_form.html

In a **support** network, the network supplies members with resources (funds, goods and services including technical advice and capacity strengthening) for members to carry out their own activities (research, advocacy etc) largely independently.

In an **agency** network, the network itself becomes an agent of change e.g., coordinating research, communications. The network develops a recognizable brand and develops outward-looking functions such as amplifying and convening. Members provide resources to the Network which in turn is charged with influencing the policy process.

Figure 4: INDEPTH is shifting from a pure support role to an agency role



- The Network develops inward-looking functions such as **filtering**, inward **investing / providing**, **community building** and **facilitation**

- The Network develops outward-looking functions such as **amplifying**, outward **investing/providing** and **convening**

In practice most research policy networks have some characteristics of both and INDEPTH will continue strengthening its abilities to operate at both levels. In particular, INDEPTH needs to strengthen its “agency” role, accessing appropriate inputs from members especially data, and leading the policy engagement process.

To work more as one network we need to strengthen both internal and external communications. Internally, the network will invest in improving communications between our members and between members and other INDEPTH organs to work as one network, foster trust and legitimacy and build a global community. In addition to scaling up interactions through the capacity strengthening program we will adopt social networking tools that enable more communication between members of the INDEPTH community and the sharing of knowledge and expertise. The current communications patterns between members severely under-leverage the network potential in sharing findings and methodologies, challenges, opportunities and solutions. Exchange visits will also be encouraged, including where possible more frequent face to face meetings of Working Group members to consolidate relationships, shared learning and mutual support.

Externally, efforts will be dedicated to building and managing the level of communication with policy-makers, collaborators and the range of external stakeholders who would benefit from the knowledge generated by the Network. This will not only stimulate demand for INDEPTH’s research products and

services, but also grow the Network's legitimacy and relevance globally, creating a self-reinforcing virtuous cycle.

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NETWORK

The strength of INDEPTH lies in providing a structure through which research requiring the use of resources and data from multiple research sites can be carried out. Working Groups are the primary vehicle through which INDEPTH conducts its scientific activities. Each focuses on a specific research topic or project that has been identified as of priority interest and on which a number of members wish to work collaboratively. Working Group members are drawn from members, the Secretariat and the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Data retrieval issues, competing demands on people's time and inadequate analytic capacity in participating members have prevented some strategically important projects from getting off the ground and meant that some Working Groups have yet to bring their work to the point of publication. A major factor limiting the productivity of Working Groups is that most people participating in their activities have multiple competing demands on their time and find it difficult to give priority to the Working Group project when working from their home site. Resources will be required to improve the administrative support provided to Working Group leaders, hold additional data analysis and writing up workshops, and provide seed money to equip Working Groups that need them with dedicated post-doctoral research assistants. Linkages with existing programs such as the masters program will be explored to provide this additional capacity.

To manage the process, the Network has divided its collaborative research projects into two categories:

1. **Working Groups** which get full administrative support and where possible funding from the Secretariat
2. **Interest Groups** where the Secretariat only has a light-touch liaison role.

For collaborative research projects in the first category, the Secretariat will help Working Groups develop realistic work plans with milestones against which their programs could be monitored. Site leaders will be informed upfront of the timelines of the portfolio of Network activities in which they are participating, to make it easier for them to link their contributions to INDEPTH into their other streams of activity.

Working Groups will then ensure that requests for inputs from members are both preceded and accompanied by a written briefing that accurately explains the overall scope and timetable of the project, the rationale underlying the request, contact details of an individual who can provide technical assistance including more hands-on support/guidance where required. Existing written guidelines for Working Groups will be expanded to codify institutional learning about effective working practices. All Working Group leaders and members will receive a formal letter of appointment clarifying what is expected of them and enclosing relevant procedural documents.

It is the responsibility of the Working Group leader to follow guidelines and tighten project management, including completing activities that involve spending money in the financial years for which they have been budgeted. The Working Group leader will also drive the articulation of the Theory of Change for the Working Group, and the articulation of Key Performance Indicators (in collaboration with the Secretariat and the Scientific Advisory Committee).

It is because of this required formalization of the Working Group roles and responsibilities that additional support, both administrative as well as technical when required, will be provided by the broad network, be it from the Secretariat, the SAC or member institutions.

FUNDING FOR MEMBERS AND INDEPTH OPERATING ORGANS

A survey of our members conducted in 2009 highlighted support for fundraising as their most important need. However, while it is the Secretariat's responsibility to seek funding for Network activities, it is not the mandate of the Secretariat to raise funds for site-specific activities. Funding for site-specific activities should be conceptualized as part of the Network's community building, facilitation and capacity development strategies. In other words, the Secretariat can organize capacity development activities that might include training in proposal writing but should not be required to write particular research proposals for site-level research activities. That role should lie with members. This will further reinforce the fact that it is members and Working Groups who own and drive the Network's scientific agenda.

Funding options for the INDEPTH Network include:

- Grants for the Network organs including Secretariat, Scientific Advisory Committee, Board
- Research grants for multi-site collaborations and Working Groups
- Sponsorship for events e.g. AGM
- Fee for service (training, AGM participation, field opportunities for students)
- Membership/subscription fee for members

To strengthen INDEPTH's value proposition to research funders, the External Evaluation recommended a Deputy Director for the Secretariat who could act as the single point of contact for multi-site collaborations, having clear responsibility for articulating the scientific justification for the work, for guaranteeing delivery of the outputs and for ensuring the primacy of the Network's interests in its relationship with its partners.

Operationally, a number of additional resource requirements have been identified across the INDEPTH organs 2010-2014:

Figure 5: Summary of additional resources required

Organ	Additional resources required	Funding strategy
Secretariat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications and External Relations Manager • Deputy Director • Capacity Strengthening Coordinator • Web 2.0 tools and systems upgrades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeted vacancy • Grants for Network Organs • Grants for Network Organs • Grants for Network Organs
Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-doctoral research assistants (salary or reassign existing Fellows from members to WGs) • Administrative support to Working Group leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research grants • Research grants

MANAGING GROWTH

Over the years INDEPTH has built a strong network of 37 health and demographic surveillance systems (HDSS) across 19 countries. Having established ourselves as a functioning research network with a substantial portfolio of activities, our focus now is not so much on further expansion as on pursuing key activities that address medium-term objectives and help us to work more as one network.

In the early days of the Network we looked to achieve broad membership and representation to achieve legitimacy as a global network. In this next phase of our evolution, we are looking to develop a stronger and more compact community rather than trying to bring in a lot of new members. This means we will be focusing on developing the members within the network right now and only opportunistically accepting new members who fill a strategic gap and/or meet a high bar in terms of research capacity.

The requirements for full membership will be developed and ratified by the full membership. Support and incentive structures that encourage members to graduate from Associate to Full membership will also be established as appropriate.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Performance measurement will be critical for this next phase of the Network's growth and evolution. Not only are funders increasingly requiring it, but measuring our impact will help us to clarify our value proposition to a wider range of stakeholders.

Performance indicators will need to cut across our three business lines (research, policy engagement and communication, research capacity strengthening) and network organs in order to clarify what is expected of each Working Group, member site, Secretariat, Scientific Advisory Committee and the Board. They will allow for a complete view of the Network given our inherent inter-relatedness and regular tracking towards defined targets will help identify critical issues as they arise so that they can be addressed in good time.

The Secretariat and the Scientific Advisory Committee will lead the development of the exact indicators, methods for verifying them and the frequency of data collection. Particular care will be given to establishing an evaluation framework that balances relevance with ease of execution.