

# Transforming Health Systems

## Better health and financial protection for all

### Why Health Systems?

While health spending has increased dramatically around the world, access to affordable, quality services has lagged. The ability to provide good and equitable health services for all people depends, in part, on the performance of health systems—networks of organizations, individuals, government entities, and technological resources dedicated to promoting, maintaining, or restoring health.

In recent years, the global health field has focused on disease and population-specific programs, with insufficient attention paid to health systems. This has resulted in dysfunctional health service delivery and inequitable financing, especially in under-resourced areas. Too many people have no access to health services. Millions are impoverished by catastrophic personal health expenditures every year. And quality care is often a luxury. While the challenge of creating high-performing health systems is universal, the problems are especially acute in developing countries.

The Rockefeller Foundation's Transforming Health Systems initiative has four key strategies:

- ▶ Fostering health systems research and agenda setting for universal health coverage
- ▶ Enhancing professional capacity to plan and manage high-performing health systems
- ▶ Harnessing the resources of the private sector to finance and deliver health services
- ▶ Leveraging interoperable eHealth systems



### Bringing Change



New technologies and demographic, epidemiologic, and economic shifts are transforming health systems in countries around the world. There is now a window of opportunity to promote strategies that steer this transformation toward better health outcomes and financial protection through improved health systems performance and the expansion of universal health coverage in low- and middle-income countries.

For example, the Rockefeller Foundation is providing support for

- ▶ the World Health Report 2010 and a WHO conference on the science of universal coverage
- ▶ capacity building among African ministries of health to strengthen public health governance
- ▶ the operation of a private equity fund that will invest in health care companies serving low-income populations
- ▶ an international collaboration to develop enterprise architecture for health information systems
- ▶ a network dedicated to developing and deploying national electronic medical record systems in developing countries

### Going Digital



Growing numbers of experts believe that eHealth—the innovative application of emerging information and communications technology in health systems—will fuel the next breakthrough in health systems improvement. Recognizing both the promise and the challenges of these technologies, the Rockefeller Foundation has launched an effort to identify new methods of using eHealth to improve health systems, with a spotlight on low-resource settings.

eHealth, including everything from mobile devices and e-learning tools to electronic health records and information-gathering software, can enable immense leaps in quality of care. The Foundation is helping to broaden the use of eHealth by supporting the development of public-private partnerships, new capabilities, and best practices for interoperability, privacy, and security.

A key milestone in this effort was the Foundation's month-long *Making the eHealth Connection: Global Partnerships, Local Solutions* conference series in 2008. Conference participants from around the world shared success stories and lessons learned about projects already underway, from telemedicine networks in Bangladesh and e-pharmacy projects in Malaysia to low-cost, sustainable electronic records for HIV/AIDS patients in Kenya.

### Achieving Results



Through the signing of the Rockefeller Foundation's **BELLAGIO eHEALTH CALL TO ACTION**—which is now being taken to global institutions, individuals, and governments with the power to change eHealth policy and practice—eHealth conference participants committed themselves to supporting the following:

- ▶ Timely, consensus-based global agenda setting
- ▶ A rational policy process for eHealth
- ▶ Adequate and coordinated funding
- ▶ Collaborative networks and action platforms
- ▶ Knowledge sharing and capacity building
- ▶ Interoperable eHealth demonstration projects

More than 240 individuals have signed the Bellagio eHealth Call to Action. At its launch, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu called eHealth “a ray of light on the horizon for the health and equity challenges that plague humanity.”

### What Will Success Look Like?



- ▶ People at various levels of health systems will have more accurate information about health care choices and will make more informed decisions.
- ▶ Ministries of health, donors, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and other institutions and financing agencies will increase their support for country health systems that improve performance and foster universal coverage.
- ▶ Internal incentives will be available to strengthen learning between policy and practice, resulting in improved policy development and greater alignment of finance to improve health outcomes.
- ▶ Governments and the private sector will communicate and collaborate more effectively.
- ▶ Country health information systems will be interoperable and use open standards.
- ▶ Governments will have greater capacity and better incentives to use health systems data to make decisions about health resources.

### ABOUT THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

The Rockefeller Foundation supports work that expands opportunity and strengthens resilience to social, economic, health, and environmental challenges—affirming its pioneering philanthropic mission since 1913 to “promote the well-being” of humanity.

For more information, visit [www.rockefellerfoundation.org](http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org) or contact [thelmick@rockfound.org](mailto:thelmick@rockfound.org).