



TheVaccineFund  
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## Improving health information systems

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### Better information for management

GAVI and The Vaccine Fund are providing performance-based grants to countries to improve their immunization services. After an initial three-year investment based on country plans, countries must show increases in the number of children they immunize, as measured by how many children receive their third dose of DTP vaccine, in order to continue receiving this funding.

But measuring impact requires confidence that the data provided are sound. In many developing countries, systems to track and monitor delivery of health services and vital health statistics are lacking. A well-functioning health information system forms an integral part of any health system. Sound data are especially important for stock management of medicines such as vaccines.

### The data quality audit (DQA)

GAVI partners developed a new tool called the Data Quality Audit (DQA); all countries receiving performance-based grants are required to undergo a DQA. Described simply, external audit teams examine health center records and compare them to reports sent to district and national levels, verifying accuracy.

In addition to the accuracy checks, all aspects of the reporting system are assessed. At national, district and health unit level several components of the system are observed: recording practices, storage and reporting practices, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), denominators and system design.

### The impact

In 2001 only one of six countries audited were found to have adequate systems. One year later eight out of fifteen countries passed the audit. Last year, another eight countries passed. In 2004, Burundi, Central Afr Rep, Congo DR, Eritrea, Guinea, Korea DPR, Lesotho, Liberia, Mauritania, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, and Zimbabwe will undergo their first DQA, and Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Kenya could be undertaking their second.

The DQA is proving to be good tool for assessing data quality and diagnosing specific health system constraints. It is also proving to build capacity; at each stage, findings are discussed with district health officers and immunization staff in each health facility. At the end of each audit, country findings and recommendations are discussed with national health authorities and where possible with the ICC. Countries appreciate the practical feedback provided to health managers on how to improve the quality of their administrative Immunization Reporting System.

The DQA has generated strong interest as a way to spotlight the importance of a strong health information system – a focus that will also serve other critical health issues such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.