

# Design and implementation of health information systems

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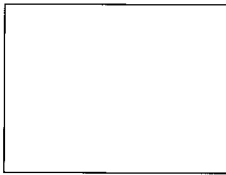
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# Foreword

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This project was proposed by Theo Lippeveld and Rainer Sauerborn to address what was a huge gap in the health development literature: concepts and experiences in developing national health information systems.

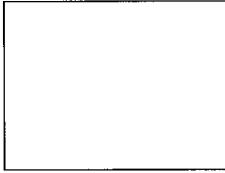
The editors were able quickly to agree on the basic orientation and content of the book—to address the information needs of routine services management. The health professionals who were called upon to contribute chapters have extensive experience in health information systems development and use in many different situations.

Yet the task proved to be more daunting than we anticipated. There was, for instance, a need for a common conceptual framework. WHO has placed emphasis on addressing priority health and service problems, but emphasis on strengthening service performance—particularly at the peripheral level—proved to be a common principle among the contributors to this book. Only a few conceptual nuances, terms and styles of presentation required negotiation.

The development of health information systems is a fast-moving field. Not only is information technology changing rapidly, but concepts and methods for making the best use of existing data for managing health services and resources are quickly evolving. Efficiency in information management is becoming increasingly essential because of the concern for cost control in services and the way service staff spend their time. Approaches such as the use of health indicators are rapidly becoming the norm rather than the exception in order to reduce data handling, while increasing validity and timeliness. Efficient use of minimum data for managing cases, clinics and community health is essential, and it is toward this end that this book has been designed.

WHO is pleased to present this collection of health information system concepts, experiences and examples. We encourage public health administrators to react to these chapters and share with us, and with each other, new methods and techniques for health information system development and use that have proved effective in their countries.

Dr Stephen Sapirie  
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