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INDEPTH launches a data repository and INDEPTHStats

On July 1, 2013, the INDEPTH Network will launch the first online data repository that specialises in longitudinal individual exposure and cause-specific mortality data from health and demographic surveillance systems located in low-income and middle-income countries, including in Africa, Asia, and Oceania. These are regions where such high-quality, particularly longitudinal, data are traditionally very difficult to obtain. Each dataset in the repository is documented according to internationally accepted metadata standard by the Data Documentation Initiative, which enables users to quickly identify and download the data they need. Digital object identifiers (DOI) are used so that the datasets are citable and succeeding versions, where necessary, are unambiguously identifiable.

In response to a joint statement by funders on the sharing of public health research data, Sankoh and colleagues emphasised that the means and capacity to share and actively participate in the analysis of data are in the hands of those who generate the data and not only those who seek to analyse it. Core funding from foundations, including the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, International Development Research Centre, National Institute on Aging and WHO, The Rockefeller Foundation, Sida’s Unit for Research Cooperation, and a Strategic Award from the Wellcome Trust have enabled INDEPTH to achieve this decisive milestone. Other funders who support the participating member centres are also acknowledged.

The INDEPTH repository is a long-term project, of which the datasets will continue to expand alongside the research data management capacity. The datasets to be launched will contain anonymised, quality assured data in a predefined event history format for about 800,000 individuals representing more than 3·7 million person-years of observation. The dataset format corresponds to the standard micro-dataset format published by INDEPTH and contains a data record for each observed individual demographic event. Associated with the repository is INDEPTHStats, a website to visualise key demographic indicators. INDEPTHStats is freely accessible and will provide researchers and policy makers with health and demographic information to guide decision making. INDEPTHStats includes indicators such as crude birth and death rates, age-specific fertility and death rates, infant, child, and under-5 mortality rates, and others. Additional indicators, such as death rates by cause of death, will be added in the near future. The indices will be displayed either by single centres over time or across multiple centres. New data will be added at least each year on July 1.

All authors are members of the INDEPTH Network.

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For the INDEPTH data repository see http://www.indepth-ishare.org
For the INDEPTHStats see http://www.indepth-ishare.org/indepthstats

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