



HIFA Annual Review 2019

Global Healthcare Information Network CIC

Background: WHO identified the need for Healthcare Information For All (HIFA) in 2004 and encouraged Global Healthcare Information Network (GHI-net) to take the lead, noting that 'Healthcare Information For All is an ambitious goal but it can be achieved if all stakeholders work together. The approach proposed by the Global Healthcare Information Network and its partners is innovative and promises to harness the international cooperation and understanding needed to achieve the goal'.

HIFA brings together all stakeholders as a global movement with a shared vision: "A world where every person and every health worker has access to the healthcare information they need to protect their own health and the health of others and will be protected from misinformation". HIFA remains GHI-net's sole activity and purpose.

Since the official launch of HIFA in 2006, WHO has engaged increasingly in HIFA's operations, including representation on HIFA's steering group and project working groups, and formal collaborations to support multilingualism in global health.

1. Highlights of 2019

In 2019, Global Healthcare Information Network (GHI-net) continued to work with WHO and other partners to develop Healthcare Information For All (HIFA) and thereby support WHO's constitutional mandate to extend to all people the benefits of reliable healthcare information (WHO Constitution 1948) and WHO's 'quintessential function to ensure access to authoritative and strategic information on matters that affect peoples' health' (GPW13, p37). Highlights include:

- The World Medical Association unanimously approved a Policy Statement on Healthcare Information For All
- HIFA presented a synthesis of HIFA discussions on the WHO guideline on community health workers (2018) at the 2nd CHW Symposium in Dhaka, Bangladesh
- HIFA discussions on 'Open access: perceptions and misconceptions' were presented at the Asia-Pacific Association of Medical Editors conference, Xi'an City, China
- A survey of HIFA members underlined the value and benefits for individuals and organisations, and recommendations for the future.

2. HIFA Community

HIFA Forums: During 2019 HIFA grew to more than 19,000 members from 180 countries, interacting as a virtual 'think-tank' across 6 forums in 4 languages: HIFA-English, CHIFA (child health and rights), HIFA-French, HIFA-Portuguese, HIFA-Spanish, and HIFA-Zambia. All six forums continued to be vibrant and to grow their membership.

The members represent the full range of providers and users of health information (health workers, publishers, librarians, researchers, policymakers, social scientists, human rights

advocates, patient representatives, and others). HIFA members communicate 24/7 about how to improve the availability and use of reliable healthcare information in LMICs.

In 2019 HIFA celebrated the 10th anniversary of HIFA-Portuguese, HIFA's first forum in a language other than English, in collaboration with WHO and WHO/PAHO.

HIFA Country Representatives: The Country Representative (CR) programme continued to grow, with 220 CRs in 75 countries. Each CR is responsible for advocating for universal access to reliable healthcare information, and for growing their membership base in their respective country. They do this by leveraging their own professional networks, giving presentations (virtual or physical, where possible), radio interviews and blogs. Chibuike Alagboso (Jos University Teaching Hospital, Nigeria) was awarded HIFA Country Representative of the Year 2019.

HIFA Country Representative Didier Demassosso (CR of the Year 2014) represented HIFA at the Pan-African Health Conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon His presentation focused on HIFA and the role of reliable healthcare information in empowering marginalised populations, especially in rural areas.

HIFA Supporting Organisations: By the end of 2019, HIFA had ratified a total of 392 health and development organisations worldwide. HIFA established a dedicated discussion forum for Supporting Organisations (SOs), where SO representatives can share experience and expertise, collaborate for shared objectives, and accelerate progress towards universal access to reliable healthcare information.

HIFA Volunteers: 450 volunteers provided their time and expertise for a growing number of projects addressing WHO priority areas (below), HIFA Country Representative programme, HIFA Steering Group, HIFA Social Media Group, and website, editing, fundraising and administrative support.

Social Media: The HIFA Social Media team expanded to 12 volunteers, with leads in place for Twitter (@hifa_org), Facebook (HIFAdotORG), LinkedIn and YouTube.

3. HIFA Multilingualism

The HIFA Multilingualism project is a collaboration with WHO, Translations Without Borders, *The Lancet* and others that aims to 1. Promote the availability and use of reliable healthcare information (including WHO publications) for the majority of the world's population who do not speak English; and 2. Support global health communication in languages other than English.

In late 2018 the project had published an advocacy paper in *The Lancet Global Health*, which noted that 'most health research is published only in English... [including] most of the health research published in countries in which English is not an official language and in which most people who would benefit from the research cannot speak English.'. During 2019 the group continued its advocacy, lobbying the World Association of Medical Editors to take action, culminating successfully in a WAME policy statement on multilingualism (January 2020).

4. HIFA Projects

HIFA continued to build its portfolio of projects, working with an increasing number of organisations for shared objectives. Each project supports a series of thematic discussions on all the forums in four languages, with sharing of diverse experience and expertise leading to collective understanding. Learning is harnessed and disseminated through conference presentations, peer-reviewed journals and technical briefs on the WHO and other websites. Each project is planned and implemented by a team that comprises HIFA volunteers with experience and expertise in the issue, together with staff nominated by the sponsor(s). Highlights included:

- *Access to Health Research*. Global discussions on Open Access with a focus on challenges for publishers and researchers in low- and middle-income countries. This included a 4 week thematic discussion on Open access: Perceptions and misconceptions, presented at the Asia-Pacific Association of Medical Editors conference, Xi'an City, China
- *Citizens, Parents and Children*. Thematic discussions on issues relating to the information needs of citizens, parents and children, including health education, promotion and communication through mass media, schools and participatory learning groups
- *Community health workers*. HIFA worked with WHO, Health Systems Global, and icddr,b on a series of multilingual thematic discussions on the HIFA forums on the theme of Empowering Community Health Workers to accelerate progress towards Universal Health Coverage. These discussions were designed to support the dissemination and uptake of the WHO Guideline on health policy and system support to optimize community health worker programmes (CHW Guideline), launched in October 2018. The findings were presented at the 2nd International Symposium on CHWs in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- *Prescriber and Users of Medicines* - HIFA worked with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Nagasaki University on a systematic review to address the question: How do primary healthcare workers in LMICs obtain information to guide point-of-care decision-making and prescribing? Subsequently published in 2020.

5. HIFA Voices

HIFA members share their experiential knowledge and expertise across the HIFA forums to create an evolving picture of health information needs and how to meet them. Key points are uploaded to a searchable open-access database. In 2019 the increasing vitality of the forums outstripped the human resource capacity to keep up. A review of the HIFA voices approach by the steering group found that a new, more efficient approach would be needed. This new approach, HIFA Voices 2.0, was developed a successful proof-of-concept was created in 2020.

6. World Medical Association Statement

In December 2019, the World Medical Association (WMA), representing 115 national medical associations and more than 10 million doctors worldwide, unanimously approved and published a Statement on Healthcare Information For All in recognition of the importance of access to reliable healthcare information and protection from misinformation. The statement was originally developed and proposed by the British

Medical Association in 2018 and 2019 with technical support from HIFA. It includes seven recommendations on how to accelerate progress towards universal access to reliable healthcare information. <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-statement-on-healthcare-information-for-all/>

7. Universal access to reliable healthcare information

Drawing on inputs from HIFA members, HIFA lobbied for six words 'timely access to essential healthcare information' to be included in the text of the Political Declaration of the High-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) at the United Nations, September 2019. The wording of the Declaration was not changed, but evoked solid support from HIFA members and advocacy continues through 2020 and 2021 to position universal access to reliable healthcare information as a prerequisite for UHC and the Sustainable Development Goals.

8. HIFA member survey

A survey of HIFA's members in 2019 found 100% of respondents say “The messages/discussions on the HIFA forum are relevant to my professional activities/interests”. 93% of respondents encourage others to join HIFA and 81% say 'HIFA helps me to understand global health issues'. Dozens of specific examples were shared where HIFA has directly benefited members and their organisations. Many suggestions were offered for HIFA to be improved further in the future.

July 2021

