

HIFA Annual Review 2020

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 2020

In 2020, 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 COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vital importance of access to reliable healthcare information and protection from misinformation, and gave rise to two new major projects: COVID-19 and Maintaining essential health services during COVID-19
- HIFA welcomed its 20,000th member and 180th country, demonstrating the growth and vibrancy of HIFA as a global social movement with a shared vision
- HIFA ratified its 400th Supporting Organisation (World Organization of Family Doctors WONCA)
- HIFA advocacy on multilingualism led to a World Association of Medical Editors Policy Statement on improving the availability of health research in languages other than English.

2. HIFA Community

HIFA Forums: At the heart of HIFA is a virtual 'think-tank' of over 20,000 members from 180 countries, interacting 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.

HIFA Country Representatives: The Country Representative (CR) programme continued to grow, with 250 CRs in 80 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. Tomislav Mestrovic (University North, Croatia) was awarded HIFA Country Representative of the Year 2020.

Supporting Organisations: During 2020 HIFA ratified its 400th Supporting Organisation (World Organization of Family Doctors WONCA), demonstrating the breadth of support for the HIFA vision.

HIFA Volunteers: 495 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 15 volunteers, with leads in place for Twitter (@hifa_org), Facebook (HIFAdotORG), LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram.

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) in languages other than English; and 2. Support global health communication in languages other than English.

In January 2020 WAME approved the following addendum to the WAME Statement on Promoting Global Health: "WAME encourages all medical journal editors to encourage authors to provide abstracts in the language of the location where the research took place and that journals should make those abstracts available to readers when provided." (January 2020)

The Multilingualism project prepared the first of two HIFA Roundtable debates at the invitation of the Geneva Health Forum 2020. Unfortunately the GHF was cancelled because of COVID-19, but the GHF is keen to host this when restrictions are eased.

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 and what steps are needed to promote and address the challenges of Open Access for Publishers, Researchers in LMICs. The Access to Health Research project prepared the second of two HIFA Roundtable debates at the invitation of the Geneva Health Forum 2020. Unfortunately the GHF was cancelled because of COVID-19, but the GHF is keen to host this when restrictions are eased. The project is sponsored by the Elsevier Foundation and *The Lancet*.
- *Citizens, Parents and Children* - Thematic discussions on issues relating to the information needs of citizens, parent and children, including health education, promotion and communication through mass media, schools and participatory learning groups.
- *COVID-19*. This one-year project (September 2020 - August 2021) is sponsored by the Global Health Academy at the University of Edinburgh, UK, to explore the information needs of health workers, policymakers, and the general public in LMICs, in relation to the current coronavirus pandemic and future pandemics. The project has supported the longest and richest discussion in HIFA's history, with more than 1300 substantive messages exchanged to date. The discussion is currently being analysed by staff and students at the University of Edinburgh and University of Toronto, Canada.
- *Evidence informed policy and practice* - Thematic discussions on Country-Level Policymaking, Implementation Research and the impact of different methods of evidence synthesis, in liaison with the HIFA Project on *Evaluating the Impact of Healthcare Information*.
- *Library and Information Services*. HIFA collaborated with the International Federation of Library Associations (special interest group Evidence for Global and Disaster Health) to support a discussion and webinar in April 2020 on the theme of Combating digital health inequality in the time of coronavirus.
- *Maintaining essential health services during COVID-19 (and beyond)*. This one-year project (October 2020 - September 2021) promotes cross country learning. Sponsored by the Department of Integrated Health Services, WHO, Geneva.
- *Mobile HIFA* - Part of a consortium to develop a funding proposal on the use of mobile phones to support primary health workers in LMICs, in collaboration with the Norwegian Institute for Global Health and Makerere University, Kampala. (The proposal was successful and the work will start in September 2021.)
- *Prescribers and Users of Medicines* - HIFA published its first systematic review (below) on the information needs of primary health workers in low- and middle-income countries, in collaboration with the University of Nagasaki, Japan, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

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. The HIFA Steering Group developed a radically new approach in 2020, with financial support from *The Lancet*. This radically new approach - HIFA Voices 2.0 - promises to be more efficient, sustainable *and* more applicable for advocacy, research and practical application.

6. Publications

Smith C, van Velthoven M, Truong N, Nam N, Anh P, Ali T, Ahda A, Hassan O, Kouz B, Huy N, Brewster M, Pakenham-Walsh N. How primary healthcare workers obtain information during consultations to aid safe prescribing in low-income and lower middle-income countries: a systematic review. *BMJ Global Health* 2020;5:e002094. <https://gh.bmj.com/content/5/4/e002094>

Pakenham-Walsh N, Godlee F. Healthcare information for all. *BMJ* 2020; 368 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m759> [BMJ editorial]

Royston G, Pakenham-Walsh N, Zielinski C. Universal access to essential health information: accelerating progress towards universal health coverage and other SDG health targets. *BMJ Global Health* 2020;5:e002475. <https://gh.bmj.com/content/5/5/e002475.full>

Fischer SE, Patil P, Zielinski C, et al. Is it about the 'where' or the 'how'? Comment on Defining global health as public health somewhere else. *BMJ Global Health* 2020;5:e002567. [This paper by HIFA members is based on a discussion on HIFA]

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