

# Foreword

The *District Health Barometer (DHB)* has helped to address a significant challenge in the South African public health sector, namely the challenge of accurately measuring change and progress over time, and effecting the necessary interventions. This challenge has been compounded by incomplete and contradictory information, as well as inadequate analysis and utilisation of data for decision making. Thus the *DHB* functions as a tool for health-sector managers to monitor and evaluate not only trends in health status and service delivery, but also the underlying quality of routinely collected health information in South Africa.

Now in its 14th edition, the *DHB* continues to produce information on a wide range of health services across the country's 52 health districts, and has become an important planning and management resource for health service providers, managers, researchers and policy-makers. The publication is divided into two distinct but interlinked offerings. The *DHB: District Health Profiles* published electronically is used by districts in their annual planning processes, and provides valuable health sector performance information and trends across all levels of the health service, both public and private, the non-government sector, as well as research and tertiary institutions. The *DHB* complements the *DHB: District Health Profiles* in featuring commentary on and analysis of selected indicators, and together the two publications seek to highlight inequities in health outcomes, health-resource allocation and delivery across all provinces and districts. Importantly, with just a decade left to realise the Sustainable Development Goals, and no direct measurement of many of these indicators within the health system, this year's edition introduces information on the calculation of a Universal Health Coverage index for South Africa using a set of proxy indicators.

We are grateful to the National Department of Health, health districts and other stakeholders for their continuing support of the *DHB* and their collaboration in the production of this unique health and planning resource. As always, we welcome commentary and feedback on the usefulness of the publication and suggestions for improvement of future editions.

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