

Foreword

The District Health Barometer project, now in its third year of publication, continues to provide a tool for health managers to monitor progress and support the improvement of equitable provision of PHC and quality of district health information in South Africa.

In the March 2007 Lancet article "Health statistics are no longer boring!"^a the South African District Health Barometer was mentioned among the publications from countries such as Canada, the USA, Mexico and the UK, that contribute to the commitment to transparency and accountability in the health care system worldwide.

Ranking and comparisons are increasingly being used by countries to assess performance and make informed decisions on allocation of resources. It is reassuring to know that South Africa, through publications such as the District Health Barometer, is being recognised internationally among the countries in the forefront of this development.

This year's report, the 2006/07 DHB, has followed much the same format as the 2005/06 report, with the inclusion of a number of additional indicators. These are: Access to medical aid, poverty rate, cost per patient day equivalent in a district hospital, and clinic supervision rate. Verbal feedback has indicated that many users prefer having direct access to the data, graphs and maps and a CD has been included with each hard copy publication consisting of:

- ◆ An electronic copy of the book.
- ◆ Individual pdf files of maps and graphs demonstrating district performance across South Africa by indicator, which may be copied and used as required.
- ◆ An Excel file with the full database of indicators consisting of 4 years of data, available for users who would like to do their own analyses. (A data file instruction booklet is included.)
- ◆ Individual district profiles with spider graphs.

We trust that as with the previous publications, the routine service level data collected and presented here will lead to identifying areas that urgently need further research and investigation and that inequities between rural and urban districts and districts with populations of differing socio-economic levels are highlighted. Furthermore it is hoped that the DHB will once again be a valuable tool for M&E and strategic planning at district, province and national level and that it will continue to improve feedback and transparency throughout the health sector, and most importantly that it will continue to lead to the improvement of the data quality of the DHIS.

Dr Thobile Mbengashe
Chief Executive Officer
Health Systems Trust

^a Boerma T, Abou-Zahr C. Health statistics are no longer boring! Lancet 2007: 369: 719.