

**Health Data as a global public good – a call for Health Data Governance**  
**Draft 29 July, 2021: for public comment to [datagovernance@who.int](mailto:datagovernance@who.int) by 3 September, 2021**

1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has increased volumes of data worldwide and accelerated the trend towards digitalization in health. It has also exposed long standing data governance issues, including issues of intellectual property rights, data access and sharing, use, reuse and storage. Persistent data gaps and fragmented approaches to governance of health data in different contexts are a major roadblock to the use of data as a global public good. Health data is a strategic asset and its collection and use requires global cooperation with clear direction in an evolving and fragmenting global landscape.

1.2 High quality data is crucial to inform policies, budgets and plans for health impact and accelerating progress towards the [2030 Sustainable Development Goals](#). Data must be collected, shared, stored and used effectively, ethically and equitably. A new global consensus on health data governance is needed to protect health data as a global public good, and to identify good data governance practices for better health, especially for communities left behind.

1.3 The Health Data Governance Summit is a platform of cooperation and dialogue with the aim of stimulating momentum for: a) securing health data as a global public good; and b) aligning support for identified good practices in health data governance. Stakeholders are invited to join this momentum, building trust to maximize benefits and minimize harms as health data is considered a global public good and governed by good practices. Specific challenges and solutions to data governance will be explored during the second day of the Summit in September 2021.

1.4 The Health Data Governance Summit builds on the [74<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly \(WHA74\)](#), the [G7 June 2021 communiques](#), the [UN Secretary General's data strategy](#), the [World Bank's 2021 Development Report](#), the [52nd UN Economic and Social Council Statistical Commission](#) and the [Partnership in Statistics \(PARIS21\)](#).

In convening the Health Data Governance Summit, WHO:

- Acknowledges data for improving health outcomes comes from multiple formal and informal sources and health data needs integrated within broader multi sectoral data governance practices
- Acknowledges the power of data to change lives and transform communities. Understanding and acting on health data can enable better health and wellbeing, ensure healthcare for all, eradicate diseases and provide protection from emergencies;
- Commits to facilitating this common vision through the collective leadership and resources of a multi-sectoral data community at all levels;
- Calls on Member States and all stakeholders to work together to agree a common approach to following good data governance practices that enable health data to be treated as a global public good;
- Supports the need for global collaboration and dialogue on health data across all sectors, ensuring shared learning and practices;
- Supports the adoption of a common set of [principles](#), building on [WHO's own data principles](#) guide the development of good practices, norms and standards for appropriate data governance mechanisms. These include:

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**Effective:** the use of data should have a clear and transparent aim to improve public health. Data sharing should be timely and as open and transparent as is possible, build on existing practice and reduce unnecessary duplication and competition. Any approach to data use should improve the quality and reliability / integrity of the use of data and apply the [FAIR principles](#) to ensure data is findable, available, interoperable and reusable;

**Ethical:** the use of data must uphold the highest standards of data protection and respect for human rights, including the right to privacy, with regard to any personal data and data aggregates of groups or individuals. This must be balanced against the ethical imperative to improve public health through the most productive use of data; and

**Equitable:** the use of data should recognise and balance the needs of all stakeholders. This requires equitable approaches to support data collection, generation, access, use and a fair sharing of the benefits that arise from the use of data as a global public good. The people and communities about whom data is gathered, and who are affected by its use should have a say over its governance.