CONNECTING ORGANIZATIONS FOR REGIONAL DISEASE SURVEILLANCE
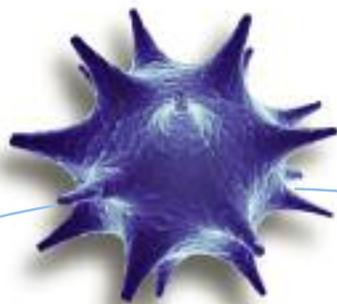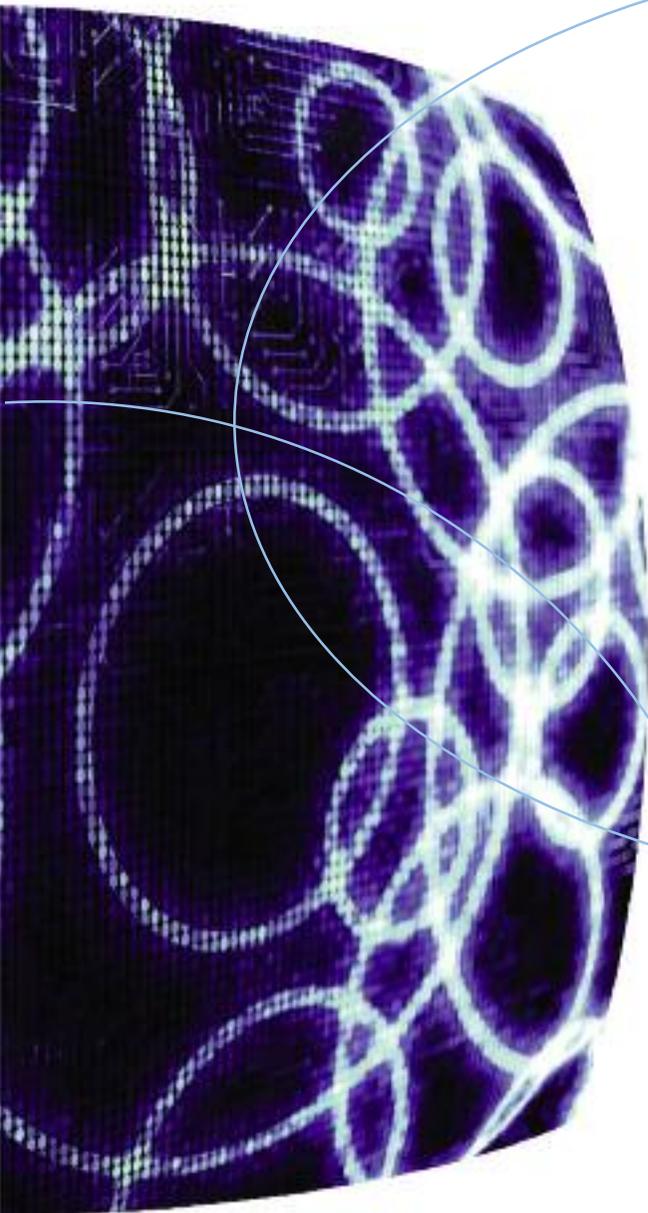
CORDS

Building Global

Health Security

by Transforming

International Actions

and Dialogue on

Biological Threats

> *"There is an urgent need to strengthen infectious disease surveillance globally by connecting and enhancing existing and nascent regional disease surveillance networks, and to work to establish new networks, particularly in conflict or low-resource settings."*
>
> **— FORMER SENATOR SAM NUNN, NTI CO-CHAIRMAN AND CEO**

DISEASE SURVEILLANCE: THE FIRST STEP

Surveillance is a key step in rapid detection and response to biological threats, whether natural or manmade. The performance of health officials in one region could have a direct impact a continent away.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognized the urgency of this issue and adopted a set of global rules to prevent and as necessary, respond to the international spread of disease.

For many individual countries to successfully meet this goal, they need increased capacity and cooperation. What's more, the uncertainties of emerging and reemerging diseases require novel surveillance capabilities that promote collaboration across sectors and country borders. Early identification and rapid response to disease outbreaks are crucial.

REGIONAL NETWORKS AS PROOF POINT

NTI directly supports the international health community to prevent, detect, and respond to biological threats. NTI helped create regional partnerships in the Middle East,

Southern Africa, and supported a network in the Mekong Basin. Partnerships involve public health officials and experts from multiple countries collaborating to detect and respond more effectively to infectious disease threats. They have created new mechanisms for data sharing. New lab collaborations have improved capacity. Exercises allow participants to test cross-country cooperation.

The Middle East partnership includes Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority, finding common ground to improve regional health security. In Southern Africa, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia have begun cooperation among key science and technology centers. Mekong Basin partners—Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, and two provinces in China—have introduced new information systems to gather and share information.

It's working. When WHO raised its pandemic alert level to phase V for the H1N1 virus (signifying widespread human infection), the Middle East consortium and the Mekong Basin networks each rapidly mobilized and communicated across borders using practiced pandemic plans. These partnerships demonstrate that even areas with difficult borders can find common ground to promote health security.

Experts first gathered in 2007 to share best practices.

REGIONAL INFECTIOUS DISEASE SURVEILLANCE NETWORKS

*In addition to the NTI-supported networks, representatives
from regional networks worldwide are participating in CORDS.*

- Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance (MECIDS)
- Mekong Basin Disease Surveillance Network (MBDS)
- Southern African Centre for Infectious Disease Surveillance (SACIDS)
- East African Integrated Disease Surveillance Network (EAIDSNet)
- South-eastern Europe Health Network (SEE)
- Asian Partnership on Emerging Infectious Disease Research (APEIR)
- Additional CORDS Participating Countries

A PIONEERING MODEL

These regional disease surveillance networks are models for transnational cooperation that promotes flexible and coordinated response to future pandemic and bioweapons threats. By connecting regional networks, true global dialogue and actions become possible, creating new levels of cooperation and security.

CORDS is a platform for this global network, facilitating coordination and communication among regional infectious disease surveillance groups, WHO, and other global partners to strengthen international health security.

CORDS makes possible the exchange of data and information that will allow networks to build capacity and meet their commitments to develop core capabilities.

CORDS creates a global social fabric and continuity of disease experts.

— DR. SUWIT WIBULPOLPRASERT, SENIOR ADVISOR,
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH, THAILAND

CREATING GLOBAL DIALOGUE AND ACTIONS

In 2007, NTI convened infectious disease surveillance representatives and other experts from all over the world, including Israel, Jordan, Thailand, Laos, Pakistan, and Tanzania. Their aim was to share best practices and lessons learned in disease surveillance and to recommend actions to advance the global capacity for public health surveillance and reduce the threat from biological attack. Their call to action addressed:

- Governance arrangements for networks
- Information and data sharing
- Capacity building.

CORDS was then launched in 2009 at an event that included representatives from Kenya, Thailand, the Palestinian Authority, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

At the CORDS 2010 meeting, regional network members and other health specialists from around the world met to determine how to further strengthen global capacity for disease surveillance.
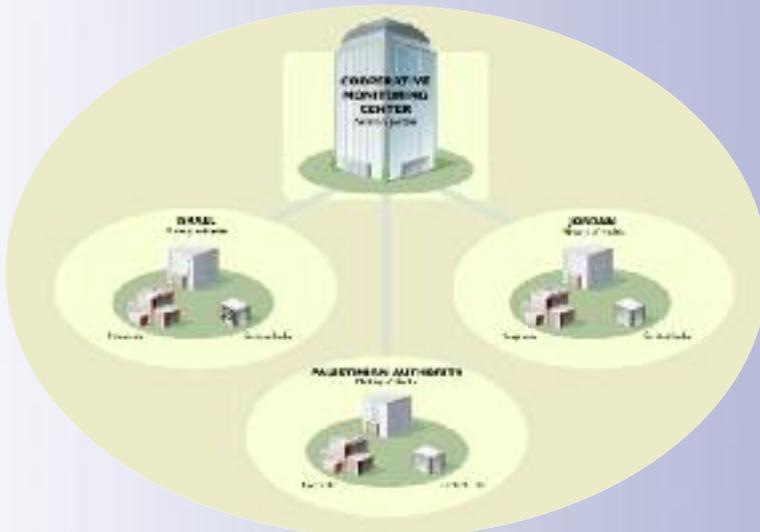
Participants were able to:

- Leverage the regional network model to form a multi-sector community of disease surveillance experts to share standards
- Harness the experience of disease surveillance experts in the animal, human health, and agricultural sectors through collaboration and direct, interactive problem solving
- Assist participating countries through the exchange of data and information to meet their legal obligations to WHO
- Make recommendations and generate support to sustain and develop regional disease surveillance networks.

LOOKING FORWARD

Working with other funders, NTI is supporting the creation of an international, independent governing board to oversee the CORDS mission. Once established, the organization will rely on committed partnerships to fulfill the un-met need of connecting networks from around the globe.

REGIONAL INFORMATION SHARING

The Middle East model improves timely data sharing among hospitals, clinics and universities. Each country sends data to a single location, which then compiles and shares regional data.
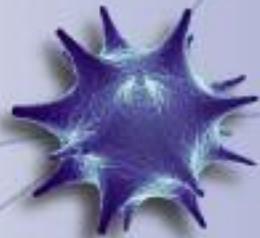
DISEASES DON'T RESPECT BORDERS

Whether natural or manmade, pandemics can spread quickly around the world, often before they are even detected, with significant implications for public health, the global economy, and security.

The international community has recognized this potential impact, and countries worldwide have committed to improving their capacity to detect, identify, and respond to disease threats.

These commitments are not always easy to implement—especially for regions in conflict and for countries with fewer resources. The hurdles to information sharing are high, even when the motivation is strong.

CORDS—Connecting Organizations for Regional Disease Surveillance—is designed to help regions successfully meet their health security commitments, improve capacity, and assist experts and communities in working together more effectively. This first-of-its-kind effort has the potential to transform health security worldwide. Today, NTI is expanding these partnerships to create a safer world.

TEN YEARS OF
NTI
BUILDING A SAFER WORLD

CORDS 2010 convened at Fondation Mérieux's conference center in Annecy, France

NTI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a mission to strengthen global security by reducing the risk of use and preventing the spread of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Founded in 2001 by former Senator Sam Nunn and entrepreneur Ted Turner, NTI is guided by a prestigious, international board of directors.

NTI's work is rooted in security concerns that CORDS addresses through capacity building and strengthening health security.

CORDS receives support from the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, NTI, the Rockefeller Foundation, Fondation Mérieux and the Skoll Global Threats Fund.

For more information, visit our website at **www.nti.org**.