Books

International health links manual

The Tropical Health and Education Trust's *International Health Links Manual* is a well written and detailed guide on how to establish collaborative development partnerships between health-sector organisations in the UK and counterparts in developing countries. Although the focus is on partnerships with UK-based organisations, the general principles are valid for organisations in other parts of the world who wish to embark on similar partnerships.

I found the book well structured, user-friendly, and easy to read. The use of case studies and examples illustrating people's experiences whether best practice, short-comings, or perceptions brings a useful notion of reality into context. The use of symbols within the text alerts the reader to interesting facts and provides references to books, internet sites, and journals. Each section ends with a summary of key points that serve as take home messages.

Over the past years, there have been countless efforts made towards developing partnerships between developed and developing nations that often fail or end up being of limited benefit to one side or the other or both. The basic problem lies in the manner in which these links are conceived and managed. In this vein, there is very limited information in the published work on how to follow a strategic approach to avoid this problem. When partnerships are being built between people with different cultures, ways of thinking, and professional priorities, knowing how to sail a health link partnership through both good and difficult waters is vital. This book contributes to filling that gap.

The first section of the book provides an overview of what links are, what their purpose is, and the broad guiding principles upon which they are based. The second section focuses on the practical aspects: creating a link, setting objectives, setting up monitoring and evaluation, coordinating the link, organising exchange visits, building up the work, tackling barriers, and finally ending a link. The third section with appendices gives useful templates such as drafting a memorandum of understanding, writing an activity report, or mapping donors.

Developing effective and sustained health sector partnership links is at present invaluable for Africa where there is currently a serious shortage of health workers both in terms of quantity and quality. Such links can contribute to the strengthening of health systems by improving health worker motivation and building capacity through relevant training and curriculum development. Other potential opportunities include enhancing health systems research, increasing international awareness, solidarity on problems facing health workers and patients, and advocating for policy change.

This manual would be useful for health professionals, managers, policy makers, academic and training institutions, health trusts, donor agencies, and non-governmental agencies involved with developing collaborative partnership links with developing countries.

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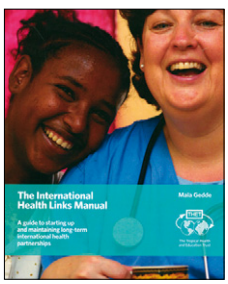


International Health Links Manual, 2nd edn
By Maïa Gedde. THET, 2009. Pp 146. £17·00. ISBN 978-0956094216

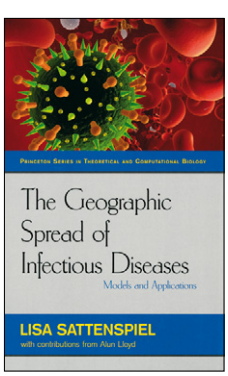
The geographic spread of infectious diseases

The spread of disease throughout cities, countries, and the world relies on the spatial nature of transmission. Urban cities might face very different effects to rural communities, depending on the nature of the disease. Infections might cluster or they might move rapidly through modern transportation networks. At a smaller scale, an individual's social and travel networks might cause them to encounter infected individuals in a variety of ways.

At the same time, mathematical modelling of infectious diseases has been steadily growing in stature. Recent successes in dealing with severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), measles, and river blindness have shown that mathematical models can be useful, accurate, and predictive. *The Geographic Spread of Infectious Diseases: Models and Applications* surveys the role that mathematical models have had—and will continue to have—in monitoring, understanding, and containing the spread of disease, with an explicit focus on spatial spread.

Interestingly, the book is written by a non-mathematician (albeit with a cocredited mathematician), which presents a fresh perspective into the specialty. Mathematical modelling is sometimes offputting, but does not need to be. This outside-in perspective is a healthy one, although occasionally contains a few errors, such as the formulation of the basic reproduction number on page 21.

The survey is reasonably thorough, although at times a little dry; more focus on case studies would have illustrated the themes much better. The one that does work, and magnificently, is the postmortem of the 2001 UK foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreak, where mathematical models famously did substantial damage. The book deconstructs the process, from the hurried attempt to create simplistic models and decisions based more on politics than health concerns to the legitimate criticisms that were levelled after the fact. This makes for fascinating reading, although the punctuation choices are a little odd: the book writes "U.K. FMD", complete



The Geographic Spread of Infectious Diseases: Models and Applications
By Lisa Sattenspiel. Princeton University Press, 2009. Pp 304. £34·95. ISBN 978-0-691-12132-1