



To stop rheumatic heart disease

## Introduction to Reach

Reach works to promote the health of vulnerable populations by providing technical support to local, regional and global efforts to prevent and control acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease (ARF/RHD). Initially founded as a partnership between the University of Cape Town in South Africa and Telethon Kids Institute in Australia we bring together the considerable expertise of leaders in the fields of Streptococcus A, rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease.

The persistent burden of ARF and RHD demonstrates that comprehensive approaches to disease control are not being delivered to populations in need. Several barriers to successful delivery of these approaches have been identified. While not easy to overcome, existing knowledge provides the tools and solutions to reduce the burden of this disease.

### **We believe global control of ARF and RHD is eminently achievable.**

Our approach draws on the proven success of comprehensive register-based programmes to effectively reduce the burden of ARF/RHD at a reasonable cost in disparate geographic settings. Allied with interventions integrated into primary health care that make use of existing platforms of care, we aim to rapidly impact the communities most at risk.

Based in Switzerland with teams in South Africa, Australia and the United States we bring together expertise in establishing health programmes in resource-limited settings, epidemiology and burden of disease research, approaches to integration of activities into existing health systems and structures, paediatric and adult cardiology and health policy making. With this knowledge we can provide expert knowledge to ministries of health and other partners to guide the implementation of their programmes to prevent and control ARF and RHD.

At the heart of this work are the communities affected. We strive to ensure that the voices of people living with RHD and front-line health workers direct and inform our approaches. This includes establishing formal mechanisms within our organization and in our partnerships to learn from and incorporate their experiences.

Our comprehensive approach to tackle ARF/RHD is split across three strategic areas:

- People - Supporting those living with and affected by RHD
- Policy – Ensuring ARF/RHD are national health priorities in endemic countries
- Programmes – Providing technical assistance on ARF/RHD prevention and control

People		
Tools & Training	RHD control efforts have accelerated in recent years, leading to increases in requests for one to one support from programme staff in endemic countries.	<i>Reach has developed tools and training materials to support programme planning, policy, practice and monitoring.</i>
RHD Atlas	The <a href="#">Atlas of RHD</a> provides an opportunity to collate national burden of disease data, disease control activities, experiences of living with RHD and advocacy efforts in unified, visually striking format.	<i>Reach is the lead organization in the data collation and development of the RHD Atlas hosted on <a href="http://rhdaction.org">rhdaction.org</a></i>
Community Advisory Network (CAN)	First-line user feedback is vital to the development of the appropriate and relevant resources that Reach strives to provide to the global RHD community.	<i>Reach provides a forum to air, discuss and incorporate feedback through the Community Advisory Network.</i>
Community Support	RHD peer support groups are critical to helping people living with RHD achieve the best quality of life they can.	<i>Reach supports communities of people living with RHD through engagement and support of peer support groups.</i>
Programmes		
Technical Assistance	RHD control requires an evidence-based framework for describing, designing, implementing and evaluating comprehensive control programmes.	<i>Reach is working with ministries of health to develop and implement ARF and RHD prevention and control programmes.</i>
Global Cooperation	Multiple partners are needed to make a meaningful impact on eliminating RHD globally and implement WHA Resolution 71.14 on rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease.	<i>Reach advises the World Health Organization and other stakeholders on implementation, research, advocacy and policy priorities.</i>
Benzathine penicillin G	Access to BPG is the bedrock of secondary prevention programs and RHD control efforts. Currently, too few people have access to this essential medicine.	<i>Reach is working to better define the BPG market and understanding of procurement, quality and purchasing issues.</i>
Vaccine development	Candidate vaccines for acute rheumatic fever are the subject of active research.	<i>Reach is exploring opportunities to reduce delays in delivering a market-ready rheumatic fever vaccine.</i>
Policy		
National Health Priority	Tackling ARF/RHD requires a commitment of human and financial resources which are too often lacking in endemic countries.	<i>Reach is supporting efforts to ensure that ARF/RHD is a national health priority in endemic countries.</i>
Estimating the country prevalence of RHD	Few countries have access to population level data on the burden of RHD. Using routinely collected data to estimate the burden of disease makes country-specific burden of disease efforts possible.	<i>Reach is helping countries use an assessment tool to draw on routinely collected data to provide an evidence-based estimate of population burden.</i>
Estimating the global burden of RHD	Reliable data on the incidence, prevalence, mortality and economic impact of RHD is needed to inform priority setting by governments and other stakeholders.	<i>Reach is working to collate different methodologies into an agreed approach for quantifying global impact RHD.</i>



**RHD Action**

United to End  
Rheumatic Heart Disease

Reach is a founding partner of RHD Action - a coalition of global organizations leading the movement to reduce premature mortality from RHD.