
Executive Summary

“Enabling International Collaboration for Global Health Research”

GLOHRA 2023-2025 Strategy

Joint report by GLOHRA Secretariat and Value for Good

Berlin, 28th February 2023

1. Background of the Report

International research collaboration – a priority issue for global health

Addressing the complex global health challenges we face today – from neglected tropical diseases to achieving universal health coverage and the human right to health – requires research approaches that defy traditional boundaries. This includes fostering exchange and developing new mechanisms of cooperation across institutions, disciplines, sectors, and countries. International research collaboration plays an important role in this regard.

Despite progress in the last decades, researchers affiliated with institutions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are still underrepresented in global health research and international collaborations with project partners in LMICs are imbalanced:

- Whilst 92% of articles in global health address interventions in LMICs, only 35% of authors are from or work within LMICs¹
- Only 17% of authors on multi-regional research studies within global health are from LMICs²
- Only 33% of editors from major global health journal editors are based in LMICs³

In Germany, the barriers to doing research with partners based in LMICs are still manifold. For example, public funding of international research collaborations often requires the international research partner to act as a subcontractor to the German research institute – corresponding with limited intellectual property rights or missed opportunities to build grant management capacities. Joint programming of funding initiatives with LMIC partners is virtually non-existent.

GLOHRA network fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and continuously growing

The German Alliance for Global Health Research (GLOHRA) was established with Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) funding in 2020 with the goal of bringing together the dispersed global health research community affiliated with German institutions. In just three years, GLOHRA has grown into a network of more than 1,000 interdisciplinary global health researchers in Germany, driven by a lean Secretariat team of only 3.5 FTEs (full-time equivalents), responsible for GLOHRA’s operations.

Under the guidance of the Steering Committee composed of 19 honorary academics, the GLOHRA Secretariat has managed to create an active interdisciplinary community and to organize research activities, providing a strong basis for fostering more international collaboration in global health.

¹ [The Lancet Global Health](#)

² [The Lancet Global Health](#)

³ [BMJ Global Health](#)

GLOHRA as enabler for more and better int'l global health research collaboration

In 2022, supported by Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) funding, the GLOHRA Secretariat decided to more explicitly define its role and value-add as a network in contributing to the internationalization of global health research and therefore launched a strategy process, with the support of Value for Good.

2. Methodology

From October 2022 to January 2023, the GLOHRA Secretariat and Value for Good drew on the interdisciplinary expertise of GLOHRA Steering Committee members, researchers from LMICs, policy stakeholders and other global health experts to develop the strategy summarized in this document. Throughout the strategy process, altogether 15 expert interviews, three strategy workshops as well as desk research and benchmarking exercises were conducted. From a long list of potential measures, the most impactful and feasible were identified, taking into consideration the available resources and budget of the Secretariat.

3. Key Findings

GLOHRA with successful first steps for international engagement

While GLOHRA's focus has been on building a strong global health research community in Germany, the network has also already developed a strong international track record:

- GLOHRA members with international backgrounds:
 - GLOHRA members representing more than 70 different nationalities and over 23% of members with a non-German nationality
 - Steering Committee members from Germany, India, Malawi, Nepal and Ghana
- Successful networking with researchers from LMICs:
 - Over 30 speakers from LMICs at GLOHRA Days and partner events
 - Over 3,800 researchers incl. project partners from LMICs involved so far in GLOHRA research and training events
- Strong contribution to international global health research:
 - GLOHRA-funded research projects in 20 countries, involving collaborators from 37 international institutions
 - GLOHRA as focal point for funding global health research, administering a total of €6.33m of public funding, comprised of €5.76m BMBF-committed funding since 2020 and €570k BMZ funding towards international research projects

GLOHRA with untapped potential to leverage the power of the network

Building on GLOHRA's successful first steps to strengthen international collaboration for global health research, the strategy process sought to understand how GLOHRA could further increase its impact. Expert interviews and benchmark analyses suggested the following actions and improvements:

- **Becoming a more effective matchmaker between members, researchers and institutes from LMICs:** While feedback from GLOHRA members revealed that the GLOHRA Day,

GLOHRA funded events, the GLOHRA Academy as well as the Global Health Research Directory are already useful ways to foster international collaboration across the network, more activities along these lines and a stronger match-making role of GLOHRA are desirable.

- **Engaging with existing relevant networks to explore potential for collaboration and to increase relevance of GLOHRA in Germany and beyond:** In addition to building a strong global health research community in Germany, GLOHRA can now also focus on fostering collaboration and cooperation with other networks addressing similar global health challenges.
- **Increasing funding administered by GLOHRA for GLOHRA members and driving proactive bilateral direct engagement with research funders:** Interviewed experts consent that GLOHRA should seek additional and longer-term funding for existing and new research projects; and that funders should leverage GLOHRA even more as a focal point in the German global health research ecosystem, e.g., through stronger involvement when formulating research and funding priorities, or when developing project pipelines and funding windows for international collaboration in global health .
- **Increasing engagement with political actors in Germany and potentially the EU to drive policy changes in favor of international cooperation in global health research:** Experts confirmed the need for systemic changes in Germany to enable long-lasting and equitable research collaboration between partners in Germany and LMICs and stated that GLOHRA could play a more active role in advocating for larger long-term and/or stepwise funding for global health research collaborations.

4. Strategy & Measures

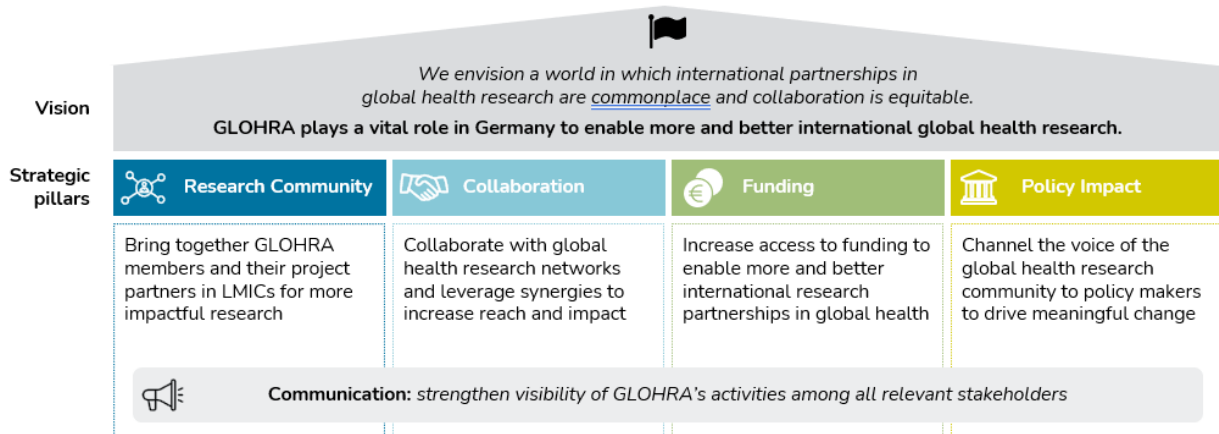
The key findings have been translated into a 2023-2025 Strategy for GLOHRA to enable collaboration for international global health research. The following section contains a summary of the vision, the strategy and the prioritized measures that the Secretariat is planning to implement.

Vision

GLOHRA envisions a world in which international partnerships in global health research are commonplace and collaboration is equitable. GLOHRA wants to play a vital role in Germany to enable more and better international global health research.

Strategic pillars and prioritized implementation measures

Four strategic pillars support the vision and lay the foundation for the strategy: (1) Research Community, (2) Collaboration, (3) Funding and (4) Policy Impact. Additionally, communication is identified as a cross-cutting lever.



Framework: GLOHRA's Strategy to Enabling International Collaboration

1) Research Community

GLOHRA seeks to bring together members of the network and their project partners in LMICs for more impactful research. To strengthen this networking aspect, the Secretariat has defined and already partially implemented specific measures, e.g., including international partners of GLOHRA-funded projects in all network communications, trainings & events as well as possibly developing buddy/mentoring arrangements between members and researchers in LMICs.

The Secretariat also aims to provide more guidance and build capacity on international research partnerships by keeping topics such as equitable partnerships and grant application and management skills high on the Global Health Academy's agenda.

To make the international character of the GLOHRA community and GLOHRA-funded projects more visible inside and outside the network, the Secretariat is planning to launch a targeted social media campaign to showcase GLOHRA's international network and projects.

2) Collaboration

Supporting the international activities of its members, GLOHRA seeks to work more closely with global health research networks and exploit synergies to increase reach and impact. As a first step, the Secretariat aims to systematically assess networks for collaboration, based on an initial landscaping of relevant networks through interview insights and benchmarks. This includes not only global health research networks already active in LMICs, such as ARUA⁴, CARTA⁵ or SEAOHUN⁶, but also multilaterals and cross-sector networks in global health research, such as EGHRIN⁷, GYA⁸ or WHO-TDR⁹ and actors of German development cooperation and German public structures abroad (GIZ offices, Embassies, etc.).

⁴ The African Research Universities Alliance
⁵ The Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa
⁶ Southeast Asia One Health University
⁷ The European Global Health Research Institutes Network
⁸ Global Young Academy
⁹ Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases

Following this initial assessment, the Secretariat will initiate joint activities, such as joint panels, collaborating on proposal calls, joint funding asks or co-signed statements and policy briefs – all designed to increase GLOHRA's reach and impact for promoting international global health research.

3) Funding

GLOHRA seeks to increase access to funding to enable more and better international research partnerships in global health. Most importantly, the Secretariat aims to increase funding administered by GLOHRA for GLOHRA members and their project partners in LMICs. Specific measures include creating new funding opportunities with BMBF, BMZ and other public funders for international projects. Non-government funding opportunities will also be explored, such as with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation or the Wellcome Trust.

Further, the Secretariat aims to position GLOHRA as the key entry point to the global health research community with public global health research funders in Germany and at the EU level. GLOHRA will engage with research funders such as DFG¹⁰ or EDCTP¹¹ to encourage funding for better international global health research collaborations.

Lastly, GLOHRA members and their project partners in LMICs should be equipped with information on how to better access funding. For this, in addition to regularly distributing funding opportunities via the GLOHRA Newsletter, the Secretariat is planning to launch a funding day/ webinar series, connecting potential funders to GLOHRA members and expanding the section on funding opportunities for global health research on the GLOHRA website.

4) Policy Impact

GLOHRA seeks to channel the voice of the global health research community for policy makers to drive meaningful change. A prerequisite for GLOHRA to pursue more effective policy engagement is to build up capacity and expertise in the Secretariat by hiring dedicated staff and to define a systematic approach for policy impact involving the Secretariat and the Steering Committee.

The approach would: (1) define relevant topics for policy impact that are politically relevant and linked to the priorities of the global health research community; (2) identify relevant policy makers to engage with (both federal ministries and parliamentary sub-committee involved in global health); and (3) launch specific formats for engagement. The latter could include regular bilateral meetings with BMZ, BMBF and Federal Ministry of Health (BMG) to discuss relevant topics for international research collaboration; round tables with cross-sector stakeholders on relevant global health topics; and GLOHRA statements or policy briefs on global health research framework conditions and structural requirements.

5. Outlook

For each of the strategic pillars, the GLOHRA Secretariat has set specific implementation targets for 2023. The Secretariat will provide regular updates on progress and achieved impact to the Steering Committee and to key funding partners.

¹⁰ Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

¹¹ The European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership



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