



# Evaluation of the German Alliance for Global Health Research (GLOHRA)

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German Alliance for Global Health Research  
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## Summary

### Background and aims of the evaluation

The German Alliance for Global Health Research (GLOHRA), launched in February 2020, is an initiative funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in collaboration with universities and public research institutes to promote interdisciplinary networking and strengthen global health research in Germany.

GLOHRA was established to address key challenges identified in the German research system with regard to global health research, namely the limited international visibility of German global health research in combination with the lack of networking and interdisciplinary cooperation among global health researchers, missing offers for structured interdisciplinary research training for global health PhD students and insufficient funding opportunities for interdisciplinary global health research.

GLOHRA's work programme and activities aim to build an interdisciplinary global health research community in Germany, enhance cross-sector research collaboration in global health and to support the next generation of global health researchers in order to boost Germany's contribution to global health research.

Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin commissioned this evaluation to provide a critical assessment of the implementation of GLOHRA and to assess the initiative's effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and impact so far. The evaluation is meant to inform the stakeholders about the strengths and weaknesses of GLOHRA and areas for improvement in the future. The evaluation draws on the analysis of internal information and data provided by the GLOHRA Secretariat, on interviews with GLOHRA members and stakeholders and on the analysis of bibliometric data and other secondary data on German global health research.

### Relevance of the challenges regarding global health research in Germany

The evaluation confirms the relevance of the challenges in the German research system that motivated the establishment of GLOHRA: Germany's representation in international global health advisory bodies is still low and does not reflect Germany's financial contributions to international global health initiatives. Analysis of bibliometric data shows that Germany's co-publication activity with LMICs on global health topics is low in comparison with the United States and the United Kingdom. The bibliometric analysis also suggests that Germany's international networking in global health research is lower than in other research areas relevant for achieving the sustainable development goals, such as environmental science.

According to the stakeholders interviewed, GLOHRA has been instrumental in strengthening the cooperation culture among global health researchers in Germany and in establishing a strong and active network for the German global health research community. Nevertheless, there is still considerable potential for strengthening networking and interdisciplinary cooperation among research disciplines and research institutions. Available offers for interdisciplinary cooperation, structured interdisciplinary PhD training and funding opportunities for interdisciplinary global health research are not yet considered being fully satisfactory.

## Development of GLOHRA membership

The number of researchers that have joined the platform since February 2020 has been impressive. With more than 1,000 members in June 2023, GLOHRA has far exceeded early expectations. The German research community shows continuing strong commitment and a high level of identification with the goals and the activities of GLOHRA.

GLOHRA has attracted researchers from a broad variety of research disciplines and global health experience at all academic career stages. Early career researchers are especially prominent among public health and social sciences and humanities. Professors are more dominant among GLOHRA members in biomedical sciences and in engineering and other sciences.

Almost half of GLOHRA's members are female researchers with strong representation in public health and among early career researchers and lower representation in biomedical sciences, engineering and other sciences and among established researchers holding professorships.

## Organisational structures and management of GLOHRA

GLOHRA has established well-defined and transparent organisational structures, management bodies and operational processes. There is a high level of satisfaction with the rules on the election of Steering Committee members that secure the balanced representation of female and male researchers and of representatives of research areas in GLOHRA's key decision-making body.

The GLOHRA Secretariat has established well-defined and suitable monitoring, evaluation and reporting frameworks that help inform the GLOHRA Steering Committee and the GLOHRA stakeholders about the progress towards GLOHRA's goals and objectives as defined in the work programme. The GLOHRA Secretariat professionally and efficiently supports the implementation and further development of the GLOHRA work programme.

## GLOHRA's project funding activities

Project funding contributes significantly to the attractiveness of GLOHRA. The development of quantity and quality of project applications confirm a high level of interest and demand for interdisciplinary global health research. GLOHRA offers suitable funding that effectively promote interdisciplinary and cross-sector global health research and provide early career researchers with career perspectives.

The experience of Steering Committee members with the proposal evaluation and selection procedures point to adequate and transparent practises. Steering Committee members highlighted the issue of substantial additional workload that comes with being responsible for the evaluation of GLOHRA project applications.

The analysis of project application data suggests that public health fulfils an integrative role in interdisciplinary and cross-sector GLOHRA projects, effectively creating links with biomedical sciences and social sciences and humanities. Representation of members from the engineering and other sciences in GLOHRA projects is still limited with very few projects recommended for funding so far.

The requirements and procedures in the GLOHRA application phase are transparent, and the GLOHRA Secretariat communicates information and supports (potential) applicants professionally. Successful applicants, however, face a double burden of administrative work, since they must submit a second application to the BMBF in German to obtain the formal grant notification for their project.

### Assessment of the impact of GLOHRA so far

The evaluation results confirm that GLOHRA provides adequate and effective measures to address the challenges identified in the German research system: GLOHRA has succeeded in attracting large numbers of researchers to join the platform, participate in the events and training offers and collaborate on interdisciplinary global health project proposals. GLOHRA has been particularly important for improving the framework conditions in interdisciplinary global health research for early career researchers.

Regarding international visibility of German global health research, the impacts of GLOHRA have been mostly indirect – i.e. through funding projects – so far. Given the small amount of funding available for GLOHRA projects, significant short-term improvements in international visibility of German global health research are unrealistic. The additional funding provided by the BMZ since 2022 has served as a useful internationalisation complement to the BMBF funds available.

GLOHRA has demonstrably contributed to improving the German research system for global health research in recent years, first by securing the commitment of a large number of German universities and research institutes to support the establishment of GLOHRA and second by raising the profile and giving global health research in Germany an institutionalised voice.

Continued public support for the platform will secure GLOHRA as a Germany-wide interdisciplinary network that is also attractive to researchers from universities and research institutes with limited global health resources. Only very few universities and research institutes would probably be able to commit sufficient resources of their own to contribute to the infrastructure required for running GLOHRA's broad network activities.

### Recommendations

GLOHRA should keep and strengthen its key characteristics as an open, interdisciplinary, research-driven and research-focused global health network. At the same time, GLOHRA should continue collaboration and exchange with policy-focused global health initiatives (e.g. GHHG, WHS) and key development cooperation actors (e. g. BMZ, GIZ).

GLOHRA should strengthen its efforts to increase membership from research disciplines which are still too sparsely represented among current members, such as engineering, economics or environmental sciences.

GLOHRA should liaise with the BMBF and DLR Projektträger to discuss options to streamline and reduce the amount of duplicate work required from project applicants. GLOHRA could consider the introduction of a funding instrument that supports international activities, implementation research actions and/ or multilateral south-south cooperations with partners in LMICs. GLOHRA could also consider project funding instruments even more geared towards the needs of early career researchers (i.e. top-up grants, exploratory grants).

To increase international visibility and outreach, GLOHRA should consider developing offers that would allow researchers from abroad to learn about, engage and collaborate with GLOHRA beyond cooperation in GLOHRA-financed projects. This could mean, for example, positioning the annual GLOHRA Day as an international event open for international global health researchers.

Finally, GLOHRA should continue to collaborate with the BMBF, the BMG, the BMZ and other competent government and private sector bodies, to increase the participation of researchers from Germany in international and European global health (research) policy and global health (research) advisory bodies.

