

Chapter 2

An overview of the Global Forum for Health Research

For a summary of this chapter, see the Executive Summary, page xv.

Overview

1. The problem

Health research is essential to improve the design of health interventions, policies and service delivery. Every year more than US\$70 billion is spent worldwide on health research and development by the public and private sectors. But only about 10% of this is used for research into 90% of the world's health problems. This is what is called "the 10/90 gap".

2. Central objective

The Global Forum's central objective is to help correct the 10/90 gap by focusing research efforts on diseases representing the heaviest burden on the world's health and facilitating collaboration between partners in both the public and private sectors. A reallocation of one per cent of research spending would provide US\$700 million for priority research.

3. Our partners

The Global Forum believes that solutions to current health challenges will depend on the strength of the partnerships created between members of the following constituencies, which are all represented in the Global Forum:

- governments (policy-makers)
- multilateral organizations
- bilateral aid donors
- international foundations
- national and international civil society organizations (CSOs) and community organizations
- women's organizations
- research-oriented institutions and universities
- private-sector companies
- the media.

4. The nature of the Global Forum

In summary, the Global Forum for Health Research (and other networks with similar characteristics) can play an important role in the overall governance of health research, contributing to the integration of the whole. Its specific nature includes the following characteristics:

- a network of networks, linking the efforts of very diverse institutions which have an impact in reducing the 10/90 gap
- catalyst (no substitute for the efforts of other institutions)
- promoter of participation in joint efforts
- informal contact point between partners
- non-bureaucratic decision-making mechanism: response to opportunities; seed money.

5. Our strategies

(a) The annual meeting (Forum)

Throughout the year and especially at its annual meeting, the Global Forum acts as a marketplace where problems can be examined by a variety of policy-makers and researchers. Presentations at the Forum address the latest thinking on the 10/90 gap and act as a catalyst for action during the coming year.

- Forum 4 was held in Bangkok in October 2000, as part of the International Conference on Health Research for Development.
- Forum 5 took place in Geneva in October 2001.
- Forum 6 is scheduled to take place in Arusha, Tanzania, on 12-15 November 2002.

(b) Priority-setting methodologies

Selecting research priorities is as important as conducting research itself. The Global Forum aims to stimulate the discussion of methodologies to help set priorities in health research. The ultimate aim of the discussions is to better relate the resources invested into various areas of health research to the magnitude of the disease burden and its determinants, resulting in a measurement of the 10/90 gap.

In particular, the Global Forum stimulates discussion and networking in the following areas:

- priority-setting methodologies (including a “combined approach matrix”)
- resource flows in health research
- burden of disease and health determinants
- cost-effectiveness of health interventions.

(c) Support to networks

The Global Forum supports networks in health research bringing together a wide range of partners in a concerted effort to find solutions to priority health problems, thus attracting new financing to these areas. Current examples include:

- Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research: the identified priorities for the Alliance are the mapping of health systems research, identification of gaps, development of tools and methodologies, and capacity building.
- Initiative on Cardiovascular Health Research in Developing Countries: the research priorities of this initiative are assessment of existing capacity, access to knowledge, surveillance system, etiological research, health promotion, hypertension, tobacco and capacity development.
- Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative: the objectives of this initiative include the definition of disease burden,

the identification of priority research areas and the dissemination of information.

- Medicines for Malaria Venture (one of the five strategies of the Roll Back Malaria Programme led by WHO) is aimed at R&D for the discovery, development and marketing of new antimalarials.
- Initiative on Public-Private Partnerships for Health (IPPPH): the priorities of this initiative are the analysis of existing public-private partnerships and the promotion of effective new partnerships.
- Research initiatives in the area of tuberculosis research, such as the Global Alliance for TB Drug Development.
- Sexual Violence against Women: the objective of this initiative is to develop a framework for measuring the magnitude of the problem and developing a better understanding of its determinants and interventions.

A detailed review of the objectives, strategies, activities over the past two years and expected results over the coming two years for each of the initiatives listed above is presented in Chapter 7.

At its annual meeting, the Global Forum welcomes presentations and discussions of efforts undertaken by all networks active in the correction of the 10/90 gap. It is ready to study various other forms of support based on proposals from its partners. Discussions are under way, for example, in the field of road traffic accidents, mental health and neurological disorders, and child abuse.

6. Operations and financing

- The Global Forum for Health Research is an independent international foundation established in 1998. It is managed by a 20-member Foundation Council, assisted by a Strategic and Technical Advisory Committee.
- The small Secretariat is based in Geneva.

- The Global Forum is supported financially by donations from the Rockefeller Foundation, World Bank, World Health Organization and the governments of Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. In addition, individual networks supported by the Global Forum receive funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Institute of Medicine of the US Academy of Sciences, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, and others.
- Assessing progress in the correction of the 10/90 gap is an integral part of the Global Forum's work.

7. Perspectives on the 10/90 gap

- Correcting the 10/90 gap constitutes a major contribution to growth, development and equity.
- Correcting the 10/90 gap is possible: it

requires the individual and concerted efforts of thousands of institutions.

- The Global Forum works as a catalyst to spur such efforts.
- Between 1997 and 2001, the Global Forum :
 - held five annual Forum meetings to review past achievements and define future joint actions in helping to correct the 10/90 gap;
 - supported various research initiatives in priority areas;
 - stimulated discussion and networking in the field of priority-setting methodologies.
- Future progress on the road to correcting the 10/90 gap depends on both individual efforts and real and effective partnerships.
- In each research area, the Global Forum emphasizes research capacity strengthening and gender issues.

Insert 2.1

Selected documents and publications

Global Forum for Health Research

*Monitoring financial flows for health research** (October 2001)

Interventions against antimicrobial resistance: a review of the literature and exploration of modelling cost-effectiveness by Richard D. Smith *et al.* (October 2001)

2000 Operations Report and Audited Financial Statements (April 2001)

Workplan and Budget, 2001-2002 (December 2000)

*The 10/90 Report on Health Research 2000** (April 2000)

Economic analysis of malaria control in sub-Saharan Africa by Catherine Goodman, Paul Coleman & Anne Mills (March 2000)

*The 10/90 Report on Health Research 1999** (March 1999)

Supported networks

Child Health Research: a foundation for improving child health. Publication of WHO/CAH and the Global Forum for Health Research/Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative (March 2002)

Annual Report 2000: Medicines for Malaria Venture (May 2001)

see also www.mmv.org

Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research: Report 2000 & Workplan 2001-2003 (February 2001)

see also www.alliance-hpsr.org

Cardiovascular Health in Developing Countries: Workplan and Budget 2000-2003 (December 2000)

see also www.ichealth.org

Eliminating sexual violence against women: towards a global initiative. Report on the Consultation on Sexual Violence Against Women, The University of Melbourne, 18-20 May 2000 (September 2000)

Sexual violence against women: a working bibliography. Consultation on Sexual Violence Against Women, The University of Melbourne, 18-20 May 2000. CDROM (September 2000)

Creating global markets for neglected drugs and vaccines: a challenge for public-private partnerships. Consensus statement. Carmel Valley, California, February 2000.

see also www.ippph.org

For the work of the Global Alliance for TB Drug Development, see also www.tballiance.org

Work specifically supported by the Global Forum

Small Arms and Global Health, WHO Contribution to the UN Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons 9-20 July 2001, WHO, Geneva, 2001

Neurological, Psychiatric and Development Disorders: Meeting the Challenge in the Developing World, Institute of Medicine, National Academy Press, USA, 2001

Gendered Health Research for Development: A Vital Contribution to Health Equity Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN), 2000

Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention 29-31 March 1999, WHO, Geneva, 1999

*available on the website www.globalforumhealth.org