

HUMANITY AND HEALTH

REIMAGINING EQUITY FOR ALL: Strategy 2023 - 2028



IGHN Team At Our Flagship Global Health Conference | October 2022





Dear Global Health Community,

It is with great excitement that we, the Board of Directors, present to you our latest strategy document. This document represents a collective effort to address the most pressing health challenges of our time and to ensure that everyone, everywhere has access to quality health care.

It is more important than ever that we work together to tackle global health issues. Our strategy document outlines a comprehensive approach to addressing these challenges, through building capacity in global health and supporting high-quality networking and partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society.

We believe that by working together and leveraging our collective expertise, resources, and networks, we can make a meaningful impact on global health. We hope that this document will serve as a call to action for all stakeholders, and inspire everyone to play their part in making the world a healthier place.

Thank you for your continued commitment to global health. We look forward to working together to achieve our shared goals to maximise Ireland's contribution to a world in which all people of all ages have the opportunity to achieve and sustain good health and wellbeing.

Sincerely,

Dr Khalifa Elmusharaf, MBBS, PgCert, PgDip, FRSPH, FFPH, MRSTMH IPMA@C, PhD

CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS,
The Irish Global Health Network

Acknowledgements

The Irish Global Health Network would like to sincerely thank all of our members and partners for continuing to bring their support, enthusiasm and experience to the work of the Network.

The Irish Global Health Network

The centrality of Global Health in all our lives has rarely been more palpable than in recent years. The profound effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic highlighted existing inadequacies in health services, exacerbated shortages of human resources for health, rolled back gains toward reaching SDG targets, and widened the chasm of inequalities.

It is increasingly clear that health is indeed global and building global resilience in the face of multiple threats is essential. Pandemic preparedness will continue to be a priority globally, with investment necessary in evidence-based practices to strengthen health systems and protect populations from disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and other health emergencies. 'Infodemics' have emerged as part of our global vernacular reminding us of the crucial need to mitigate the effects of false information through tailored public information campaigns and intersectoral collaboration. Conflict and political upheaval leading to crises of refugees and internally displaced populations continues to impact the lives of millions of people. The need to strengthen mental health and psychosocial services globally is at a critical juncture reflected in WHO's call to action on mental health transformation. Climate Disasters continue to be a threat, increasing deaths, illnesses due to extreme weather events, causing food system disruptions and population displacement. Inclusion, gender and stigma remain top barriers to achieving health for all and therein lie solutions to tackling the most complex of global health issues. How we respond, collectively, as a global community to these threats make the difference in improving the lives of those who carry the biggest health burden.

“The most vulnerable populations in the world have now become even more vulnerable. Those we left behind before are now even further behind. Covid has laid bare and exploited fundamental inequities in access to public healthcare and the reality that healthcare can be used to empower or curtail the human, civil and political rights.”
Mike Ryan, Executive Director, WHO Health Emergencies Programme, acceptance speech at the Trócaire Romero award 2021.

MIKE RYAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WHO Health Emergencies Programme, acceptance speech at the Trocaire Romero award 2021.

The Irish Global Health Network (IGHN) is an independent network of people from different backgrounds, sectors and disciplines who are concerned with health inequalities and issues that impact on the health and development of populations at a global level, with a particular commitment to those living in middle and low-income countries.

First established in 2004, **IGHN** has within its membership, health and development professionals and others with an interest in and a commitment to influencing education, advocacy, policy and learning. Members come from the NGO sector, health sector and academic both in Ireland and in the Global South.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2018-2022

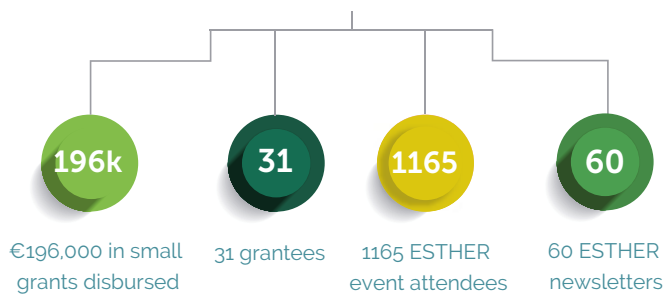
Goal 1:

Build Capacity in **Global Health**



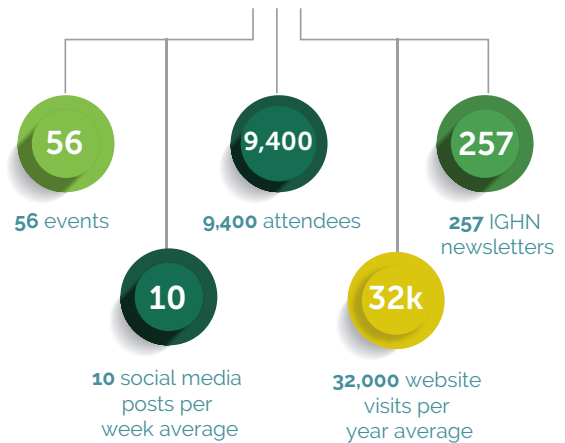
Goal 3:

Support Engagement in **Global Health** through Facilitation of High Quality Partnerships



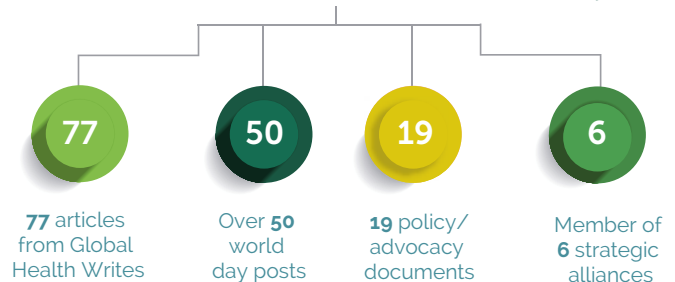
Goal 2:

Provide a Platform for Increased **Knowledge, Dialogue and Networking**



Goal 4:

Influence **Global Health** Policy, both in Ireland and Internationally





Panel discussion at the Annual Professor Father Michael Kelly Lecture on HIV and AIDS, December 2022 (Image © IGHN 2023)

IGHN VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

OUR VISION

Maximising Ireland's contribution to a world in which all people of all ages have the opportunity to achieve and sustain good health and well-being.

OUR MISSION

Our mission as a network is to facilitate learning, connecting, influencing and engaging for individuals and institutions within the global health community in Ireland and worldwide.

OUR VALUES AND WAYS OF WORKING

We are a network, where membership is open to all and everyone is treated with respect. We strive constantly to improve our work based on learning from our actions, partners, stakeholders and members who are central to our ability to continue to deliver quality activities valued by our members and funders. We work both proactively and responsively. We are proactive in identifying key issues and cross-cutting themes that are important for the global health community in Ireland. We are responsive to emerging issues and member or partner interests. We ensure meaningful participation of young professionals in all activities we conduct. Within our organisation, we seek to be open and transparent about our decision-making processes and accountable to our funders and membership.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND JUSTICE

IGHN is committed to embedding equality, diversity, inclusion and justice (*EDIJ*) across our activities to ensure that the space we work in, interact, and create sustainable global health solutions is defined by dignity and respect using a systematic and intentional approach.





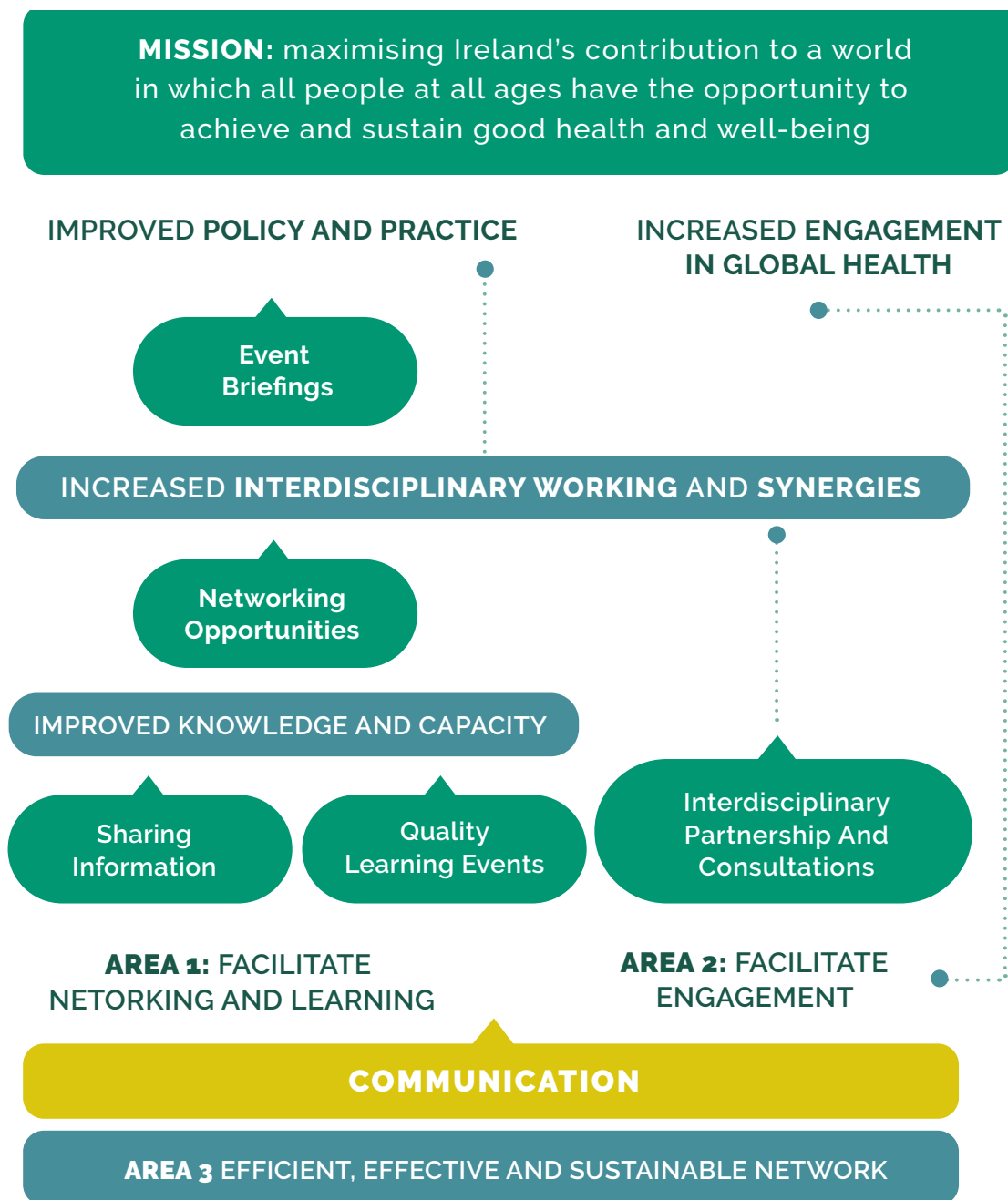
Panel discussion at our flagship global health conference, October 2022 (Image © IGHN 2023)

What We Do

We seek to create efficiencies and synergies, promote effectiveness and reduce duplication in the work of the global health community in Ireland through facilitating the flow of information between disciplines, between sectors and between funders and recipients. By engaging more young people, health sector professionals, development professionals and academics in global health we are sustaining and, where possible, growing the Irish contribution to global health.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Our theory of change encompasses all the work we do. Its foundation lies in building and sustaining an effective and efficient network, paired with high-quality communications. From there, each of our strategic focal areas and actions build upon each other to allow us to reach our mission.



Strategic Focal Areas

AREA 1: Facilitate Networking and Learning	AREA 1: Facilitate Networking and Learning
AREA 3: Efficient, Effective And Sustainable Network	

WE HAVE TWO EXTERNAL STRATEGIC FOCAL AREAS AND ONE INTERNAL FOCAL AREA RELATING TO THE STRENGTH OF THE ORGANISATION ITSELF. **THESE ARE:**

AREA 1:	Facilitate networking and learning through high quality events and sharing information
AREA 2:	Facilitate engagement in global health through partnerships and linking individuals and organisations
AREA 3:	Ensure an effective, efficient and sustainable network

AREA 1: FACILITATE NETWORKING AND LEARNING THROUGH HIGH-QUALITY EVENTS AND SHARING INFORMATION

A key strength of our network is the ability to connect individuals and institutions across disciplines to innovate, coordinate, and learn from each other. We do this through providing high quality learning opportunities and through the organisation of events and conferences. We are also a unique conduit for information within the global health community in Ireland, accessed by our members, Irish Aid and the wider global health community. Our high-quality learning events are built around a cross-cutting theme each year allowing us to build traction among practitioners, researchers and policy makers and ensure that Irish work in global health continues to be at the cutting edge.

While our members come from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds there are many issues in global health that underpin the ability to deliver quality health services within limited resources. These are global issues faced by all countries. In exploring the best way to address these issues we can benefit not only health outcomes in low and middle-income countries but also here in Ireland. Cross-cutting issues address areas that apply across multiple technical areas in health sector programming.

Examples of these cross-cutting global-local issues include:

To do justice to these often-complex issues, we work under a broad theme which will be explored through a linked series of events, policy and practice briefings, podcasts, information sharing and where applicable media awareness.

- Pandemics, such as COVID-19
- Addressing gender equity
- Strengthening health systems
- Strengthening the health workforce
- Achieving universal health coverage
- Working towards decolonization of the global health space
- Achieving equitable access to medicines and vaccines
- Improving the interface between primary health care and community health
- Embedding quality improvement in health service delivery
- Improving mental health and well-being
- Managing non-communicable diseases
- Promoting human rights
- Youth-friendly services
- Addressing stigma and inclusion
- Strengthening management and leadership
- Reaching underserved populations
- Ensuring inclusion of people with disabilities
- Working to end gender-based violence

We will also seek to create new partnerships and work alongside both international and national interest groups connected to the theme. All these activities will build on each other in one thematic area to create traction and synergy that has the potential to positively influence policy and practice in Ireland.

The IGHN is proud to be the host of the Irish Aid Annual Professor Father Michael Kelly Lecture on HIV and AIDS. This lecture brings media attention and ensures that HIV/AIDS remains on the national and global health agenda. We will continue to organise and host the lecture.

We will focus on creating new innovative methods to link people together based on their interests or potential synergies. In particular, we will focus on innovative methods to bring people together at our events and will evaluate how technology might help us signpost and connect people with similar or complementary interests.

We intend to host regular global health themed events and conferences in Ireland subject to identifying sufficient resources required for organising and supporting them. Our events are organised in partnership with NGOs, the Health Service Executive and academic institutions.

As a network with members across Ireland and further afield, many of our members access our e-communications through the newsletter, website, or social media platforms including Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube.

- The newsletter forms a vital conduit of news and opportunities within the global health community in Ireland. It also allows us to circulate information on emerging and key issues in global health.
- Our YouTube channel allows us to reach a larger audience for some of our key speakers and lectures.
- Our website and social media pages keep our membership up to date on upcoming events and allows us to archive key information and resources.
- Our social media platforms allow us to engage with the global health community both here in Ireland and globally.

We seek to highlight the work of our members, engage in key debates and raise awareness around emerging and key issues in global health.

EXAMPLES OF KEY ACTIVITIES			
IGHN Bi-annual abstract-driven Conference	Podcast series on key global health issues	Irish Aid Professor Father Michael Kelly lecture on HIV and AIDS	Learning events on key emerging issues in global health
Innovative networking opportunities at events and online	Newsletters circulated at least twice a month to the membership	Appropriate use of the website and social media channels to circulate and archive information	Engage with the global health community in Ireland and globally through social media



Some of the wonderful speakers at the Annual Professor Father Michael Kelly Lecture on HIV and AIDS, December 2022 (Image © IGHN 2023)

AREA 2: FACILITATE ENGAGEMENT IN GLOBAL HEALTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS AND LINKING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS

As a network, our primary role is to link organisations and individuals to enhance learning and collaboration. We seek to promote engagement in global health across disciplines. We will continue to collaborate with our core partners across the health and development sectors who are central to our ability to deliver value to our members. Our partners contribute ideas, expertise, members for working groups, speakers, in kind contributions such as venue space and financially through the Friends of the Network scheme. We facilitate access to the global health community for our partners and indeed any organisation with information or events of importance to the community. All our events are delivered in partnership with other organisations. Research has shown that successful networks are built on communication and the synergies that come from formal and informal interaction between members. We invest in high quality communications using a wide range of current technologies to effectively communicate and connect with our members. A particular focus of this strategic plan is the use of new and innovative techniques to link and connect our members at face-to-face and online events, through social media, or through signposting.

IGHN and the Health Service Executive (HSE) have a strong relationship, particularly around supporting institutional health partnerships between health institutions in Ireland and those in the Global South. We have hosted the ESTHER Ireland secretariat since 2014 and continue to provide technical support, network and learning opportunities to health partnerships as well as administer a grant fund aimed at facilitating the development and strengthening of partnerships. Until 2023, we have supported established health partnerships and initiatives through 63 grants with total funds of 482,050 euros. These health partnerships work in several countries across Africa and Asia and utilise ESTHER funds to focus on a variety of issues such as Mental Health, Non-Communicable Diseases, Maternal and Child Health, and Capacity Building and Training for healthcare professionals.



Selection of photos of various **ESTHER Ireland Partnerships**
 (Image © IGHN 2023)

A key priority for us is to ensure meaningful participation of future global health professionals and champions through student engagement. We provide support to the **Student Outreach Team (SOT)** who have representatives across Irish Universities. In 2023, there were **SOT** representatives in eight universities. The groups in each university are overseen by the **SOT Coordinators**, and provide students with the opportunity to learn new skills in organisation, event planning, writing and communication as well as raising their awareness of key global health issues and careers.



SOT Coordinators Eunice Phillip and Amy Ennis
 (Image © IGHN 2023)



When there are new policy consultations which touch on global health, we will coordinate responses from our membership, pulling together their considerable expertise and insights to benefit Ireland's policy making. We will also actively lobby for development spending by the Irish government.

KEY ACTIVITIES			
Sustain an engaged membership	Maintain and grow our partnerships	Host and manage the HSE Institutional Health Partnership Programme, ESTHER Ireland	Support the Student Outreach Team in all major third-level institutions
Host an All-Ireland Student Debate on Global Health	Facilitate interdisciplinary working in global health in Ireland	Coordinate and/or participate in inter-sectoral health-related responses to policy consultations and lobby for development support and resourcing	



Networking session
at the 7th ESTHER Ireland
Partnerships Forum,
September 2022
(Image © IGHN 2023)

AREA 3: ENSURING AN EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE NETWORK

We are a network with a very small central staff and limited resources; as such we have to use what we have wisely to create the greatest value for our members and funders. It is important that we work as effectively and efficiently as possible working within our limited resources whilst ensuring that we retain and look after our staff, interns and those that volunteer their time for the network. We will seek to build our network so that it is sustainable and strong enough to weather changes in governance, personnel and funding into the future. We will also implement changes to reduce our environmental impact and facilitate environmental sustainability. **Specifically we will:**

- **Maintain an active, diverse, engaged and representative Board**
- **Identify and evaluate opportunities for cost/resource sharing (such as office space)**
- **Explore opportunities to increase and broaden our income streams**
- **Explore opportunities for global and national partnerships**
- **Explore staffing models to increase human resources**
- **Maintain strong financial reporting**
- **Maintain strong monitoring and evaluation**
- **Keep abreast with new opportunities in ICT**
- **Sustain an engaged and active membership**
- **Develop and implement an organizational environmental sustainability policy**

Governance and Management

Our Board is diverse and interdisciplinary with representation from academia, development NGOs, health professionals and global health students. They provide oversight of the work of the Network. Board members are highly active in the work of the Network.

Our Secretariat, although small, encompasses people with a wide skill set and has built strong relationships with key organisations and individuals in the global health sector. These relationships allow us to create synergies that individuals or institutions cannot achieve alone.

Partnership and harnessing the expertise and passion of our members allows us to deliver more than we could working solely through our Secretariat. This includes significant contributions in kind whether through access to venue space or time to help organise or plan events.

We operate an ethical internship scheme offering entry-level global health experience, mentoring and the opportunity for interns to pursue their own special projects.

Our Annual Reports can be found [here](#).

Who is IGHN



Apart from its over **3,000** members, **IGHN** is run by a small Secretariat and supported by a **Board of Directors**.

Nadine Ferris France, *Executive Director*

"Stigma, particularly among those most marginalised, continues to be a huge barrier to equity and undermines the human right of every person to access health care."



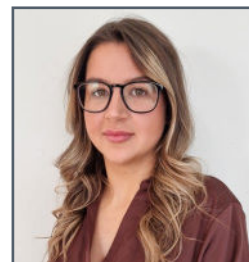
Nor Nasib, *Finance Officer*

"Strive to build a strong foundation and structure through social inclusion."



Maisie Jones, *Programme and Communications Officer*

"Positive and equitable health outcomes rely on trust in health information and advice. To achieve this trust, health education and communication must be clear, accurate, inclusive, and accessible to all."



Hala Ali, *ESTHER Ireland Coordinator*

"We need to think radically about our current global health issues and question our conventional, and maybe comfortable, approaches to tackle them."



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr Khalifa Elmusharaf,
Chairperson of the Board

"Shifting the power in global health to have a global balance is an impossible goal without fundamentally changing the structures within which we currently operate."



Dr Sadhbh Lee,
Board Member and Finance Committee Member

"The role of the environmental crisis as a force multiplier for health and social inequalities is one of the most important global health issues we face."



Dr Unarose Hogan,
Vice Chair of the Board

"Where you happen to be born should not determine your right to access healthcare and education, to earn a living and to be safe. This is the primal injustice that must propel us forward, to seek a more equitable world."



Dr Rosie James,
Board Member

"I want to see more systems thinking in global health, where we take account of the complex interplay between political, economic, commercial, geographic, and social structures that are ultimately huge determinants of health."



Dr Enida Friel,
Board Member and Finance Committee Member

"The many crises we face are a challenge to addressing inequalities in global health, but also an opportunity to do things differently, learning from our past experience, going into the future."



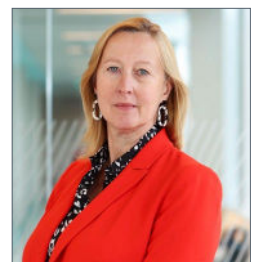
Eric O'Flynn,
Board Member

"Passionate about expanding access to quality surgical care worldwide."



Dr Debbi Stanisreet,
Board Member

"Clean energy for all is one of the greatest global health problems we face and is most pressing among the global poorest. It is also contributing significantly to carbonisation of the atmosphere and the risk of climate disaster."



Ben Adams, Board Member and Finance Committee Member

"Everyone has mental health and mental health is everyone's business, regardless of race, cultural beliefs, context, religion, gender, sexual orientation and disability. Everyone has a human right to equal opportunities for mental health - a right that we must realise."



Eunice Phillip,
Board Member

"Health4All, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion remain buzzwords if their guiding principle is not rooted in Humanity."





Monitoring and Evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed alongside this strategic framework to allow assessment of progress against the plan. Our monitoring and framework is underpinned by our Theory of Change. Targets and measures are monitored on an annual basis and are agreed alongside the annual workplan.



The **Irish Global Health Network** is an independent network of people concerned with the health and development of populations at a global level, with a particular commitment to populations in low-income countries.

Established in 2004, the **IGHN** welcomes individuals and groups interested in promoting global health-related education, research, policy and advocacy. We offer our members opportunities for learning and collaboration through events and conferences, and we work to create and strengthen both national and international links within the global health community. Become a member by visiting our website and signing up at www.globalhealth.ie.

ANNEXURE



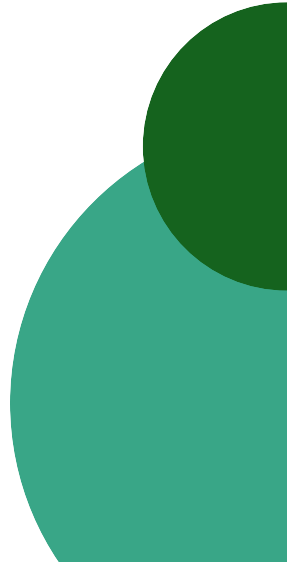
IGHN Partnerships Programme

Strategy Paper 2025-2028



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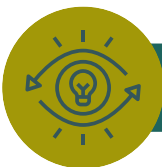
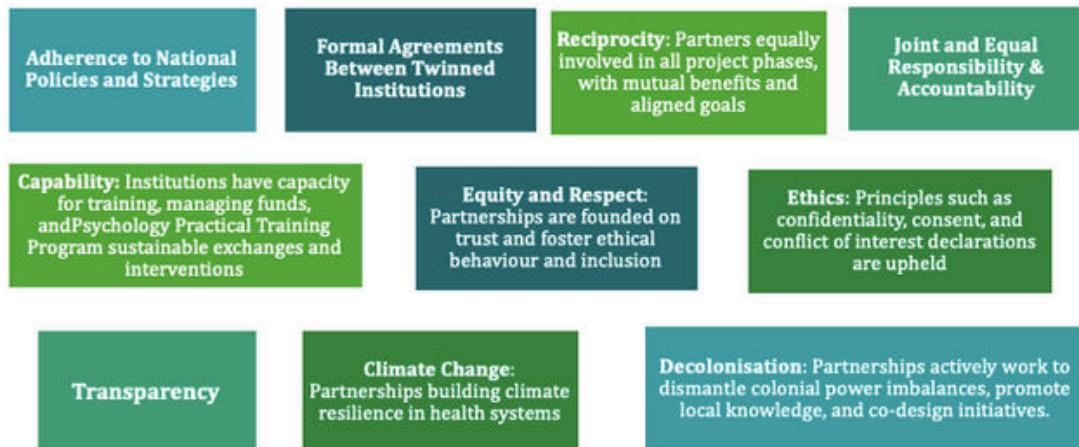


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our IGHN Partnerships Programme supports partnerships between Irish health institutions and their counterparts in low and middle-income countries, to improve health outcomes through long-term collaborations. The programme evolved from the ESTHER Ireland programme, a well-established partnerships programme that was an effective and cost-effective model of the institutional health partnership approach (Jones, 2023). This strategy was developed through a consultative process with key stakeholders in Ireland and in partner countries during 2024.

The programme provides a model of support and guidance for partnerships to improve their practice to achieve quality of partnership standards as outlined in the Principles of the IGHN Partnerships Programme below. These standards include mutual benefits, trust and equality, and adherence to national policies and strategies, and the resulting quality of partnership is considered as the foundation for all project objectives.

Principles of the IGHN Partnerships Programme



Vision of the IGHN Partnerships Programme

Our vision for the programme is: "To foster sustainable, equitable, and innovative health partnerships that enhance global health outcomes by empowering institutions, building resilient health systems, and promoting the sharing of knowledge and resources across borders. We support partnerships at all stages of development, from newly formed collaborations to established alliances, ensuring comprehensive support and growth opportunities."

Strategic Priority 1: Strengthening Institutional Health Partnerships through Grants

We will provide grants aimed at facilitating the development of partnerships for health system strengthening. The grants programme will comprise of 2 grant types:

Grant Types	Purpose and focus of Grant	Individual grant amount
New partnerships	Seed funding for establishment of the partnership	8-10K
Established partnerships	Strengthen the quality of the partnership and capacity of the partnership to demonstrate impact	8-10K

These catalytic grants are designed to provide the initial momentum needed to spur collaboration and innovation, helping to accelerate the development and sustainability of partnerships.

Strategic Priority 2: Supporting Partnerships on Quality of Partnership, Impact Measurement and Sustaining Funding

Building on our established expertise, standards and tools, including the accreditation process, that have been instrumental in building quality partnerships, we will focus on equipping partnerships with the skills to quantify their impact and to source funding. This will ensure that new partnerships will demonstrate quality of partnership such as adherence to principles including reciprocity and equality and will also develop an evidence base for the work of the partnership that will emerge from this strong foundation. With the capacity to demonstrate their impact, and support in fundraising, partnerships will be better placed to source funding to support the long-term sustainability of the partnership.

Strategic Priority 3: Establishing New and Diversified Sources of Funding for the IGHN Partnership Programme

To sustain and to grow the programme, and to support mature partnerships with larger, multi-annual grants, a diversity of fundings sources will be required in addition to the annual Irish Aid grant that has supported the previous programme. New sources of funding will enable the programme to support the increasing number of mature partnerships that are poised for greater impact. In addition to identifying, and securing additional funding, the IGHN will work to build the robust systems and processes required to manage and report on larger and multiple funds.

In conclusion, the IGHN Partnerships Programme Strategy Paper for 2025-2028 outlines a clear commitment to supporting sustainable, impactful health partnerships between Irish institutions and their counterparts in low- and middle-income countries. By prioritising grants for partnership establishment and strengthening, ensuring partnership quality and measurable impact, and diversifying funding sources, the programme is poised to support long-term collaborations that deliver health systems strengthening. These strategic priorities are rooted in a shared vision of equity, reciprocity and long-term commitment aiming to bring about lasting change through this effective and resource efficient model.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF THE IGHN PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAMME

The Irish Global Health Network (IGHN) is an independent network of people from different backgrounds, sectors and disciplines who are concerned with health inequalities and issues that impact on the health and development of populations at a global level. The IGHN is particularly committed to addressing the needs of marginalised and vulnerable populations within low- and middle-income countries, recognising the social gradients and health disparities that exist within nations. First established in 2004, the IGHN has within its membership, health and development professionals with a keen interest in, and a commitment to influencing education, advocacy, policy and learning. Members come from Ireland and the Global South and span the NGO, health, UN, and academic sectors.

As a network, our primary role is to link organisations and individuals to enhance learning and collaboration. We seek to promote engagement in global health across disciplines. We collaborate with our core partners across the health and development sectors who are central to our ability to deliver value to our members.

Our IGHN Partnerships Programme supports partnerships between Irish health institutions and their counterparts in low and middle-income countries. The programme evolved from the ESTHER Ireland programme, a well-established partnerships programme that was formed under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Irish Aid and the Health Service Executive (HSE) in 2012. The Global Health Team within the HSE provided the strategic overview for the ESTHER Ireland Programme and the IGHN implemented the programme under a service level agreement with the HSE and funding from Irish Aid until 2024.

Evaluations of the ESTHER programme, as with evaluations of similar initiatives in other regions, consistently demonstrate the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the institutional health partnership approach (Jones, 2023; DFID, 2016). The Institutional Health Partnerships approach is aligned with the approach of the World Health Organisation Twinning Partnerships for Improvement strategy which has shown effective outcomes in improving healthcare systems globally. Additionally, ESTHER Ireland was an influential member of the European ESTHER Alliance, a network that promoted the exchange of best practices, knowledge, and resources among its members, enhancing the impact of health partnerships. The learning from the Alliance is embedded in the practices and tools that form the foundation of this programme.

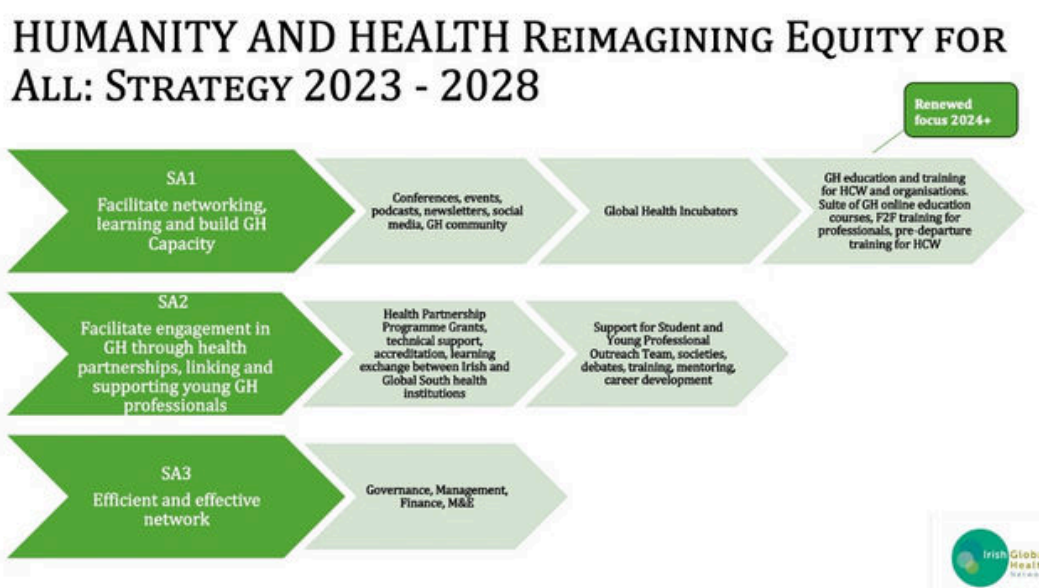
CONSULTATION PROCESS FOR THE NEW STRATEGY

A decision was reached in 2023, following discussions between Irish Aid, the HSE and the IGHN, for Irish Aid to directly fund the IGHN for the partnerships programme from 2024. This brought about an in-depth consultation process that led to this strategy paper. The process involved a desk review of ESTHER Ireland/ESTHER Alliance resources as well as other relevant literature. An in-person consultation with key stakeholders including partnerships, representatives of the Board, HSE, and IGHN staff was followed by an online consultation with 'Southern Partners' and other partners including an Irish Aid overseas health advisor and those partnerships that were unable to attend the in-person workshop. Irish Aid was additionally consulted as a key stakeholder. Following on from these consultations a draft strategy was shared with the IGHN Board and subsequently discussed. Draft versions were also shared with the HSE and Irish Aid for feedback. A final draft was approved by the IGHN Board in November 2024.

We are continuing the legacy of the ESTHER Ireland programme by taking ownership and setting a new strategic direction under the name of the IGHN Partnerships Programme. This initiative supports high-quality health partnerships aimed at delivering significant health outcomes in the Global South.

IGHN PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAMME WITHIN IGHN STRATEGY

The IGHN Partnerships Programme operates primarily within Strategic Focal Area 2: 'Facilitate Engagement in Global Health through health partnerships, linking and supporting young global health professionals' outlined in the revised IGHN Strategy, HUMANITY AND HEALTH Reimagining Equity for All: Strategy 2023 – 2028:



The programme promotes learning and networking, cultivating a community of partnerships that mirrors the *IGHN mission of facilitating learning, connection, influence, and engagement for individuals and institutions within the global health community, both in Ireland and worldwide.*

The Partnerships Programme package of support to partnerships includes networking and learning, global health education, fundraising, communications and documentation, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) including project and budget management, standard setting for partnerships that includes an accreditation process for quality of partnerships, and a small grants programme. The IGHN experience, technical skills, network connections, institutional knowledge, and training and learning expertise complement and support delivery of the Partnerships Programme.

PARTNERSHIPS IN GLOBAL HEALTH

The significance of partnerships in global health has been underscored by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among these goals, SDG 17 specifically focuses on fostering partnerships for development. Its aim is to enhance cooperation between high-income countries and their counterparts in low and middle-income countries, narrowing the disparities through initiatives such as sharing knowledge, transferring technology, and creating research opportunities. Institutional Health Partnerships (IHPs) are an important contribution to this goal. The Irish Aid policy emphasises the importance of partnerships in reaching the poorest and most vulnerable communities, guided by the principle of "leaving no one behind" (Dept Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019)

The World Health Organization (WHO) highlights several critical global health issues, including the ongoing impact of infectious diseases like COVID-19, the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and the escalating threats from climate change, which intensify food insecurity and natural disasters. WHO also underscores the importance of strengthening health systems to achieve universal health coverage and effectively respond to health emergencies. Additionally, humanitarian challenges are increasingly complex, with conflicts, such as those in Sudan, Ethiopia, Palestine and Ukraine, complicating the delivery of impartial aid and leaving many vulnerable populations without adequate support. These issues align closely with Irish Aid's priorities, which emphasize climate action, reducing humanitarian need, and ensuring equitable access to health services, particularly in maternal and child health, to build resilient health systems capable of withstanding future challenges.

The IGHN Partnerships Programme is strategically positioned to contribute to addressing these global health challenges by fostering institutional health partnerships that strengthen health systems in low- and middle-income countries. Through collaborative efforts, the Programme supports the development of sustainable health services that are better equipped to manage both communicable and non-communicable diseases.

INSTITUTIONAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS APPROACH

Our IGHN Partnerships Programme fosters the institutional health partnerships (IHP) approach. Partnerships are thus defined as *collaborative relationships between at least two institutions based on trust, equality and mutual interest to work as peers towards common objectives. They contribute to the improvement of health services through reciprocal institutional strengthening, capacity building and health workforce development* (ESTHER Alliance). The partnerships between institutions in Ireland and institutions in low- and middle-income countries aim to improve health outcomes in low- and middle- income countries through long-term collaborations, usually focused on capacity building, clinical service delivery, and operational research. A key feature of IHP's is the provision of sustained peer-to-peer support, with the overarching goal of strengthening the health workforce and its institutions.

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The approach is value-led and these values as outlined in the ESTHER Charter for Quality of Partnership are now updated within the Principles of the IGHN Partnerships Programme. These principles include locally led, mutual benefits, trust and equality, and long-term commitment, and the resulting quality of partnership is considered as the foundation for all project objectives.

The model upon which our IGHN Partnerships Programme operates provides support and guidance for partnerships to improve their practice to achieve quality of partnership standards. A range of tools have been specifically developed to support the achievement of these standards including the EFFECT Tool, that guides discussions about the quality of a partnership and identifies potential areas for improvement. An accreditation tool allows partners to self-assess their adherence to each key principles for quality of partnership (as contained within the Charter for Quality of Partnership) and awarding accreditation acknowledges and showcases partnerships that have demonstrated the highest quality of partnership and reciprocity.



This approach aims to make a significant contribution to health outcomes in low- and middle-income countries by addressing inequities in access and coverage while improving the quality of services through capacity building and institutional development. Human resource capacity is strengthened through peer-to-peer relationships between personnel working in partner institutions. Accordingly, supported partnerships are “agents of change” in a multiplicity of intervention areas that focus on the creation of sustainable and resilient partnerships with positive changes at all stages of the results continuum.

Institutional health partnerships often focus on innovation to improve healthcare delivery, outcomes, and systems. Innovative models of healthcare delivery, such as value-based care or patient-centred care, are frequently explored through institutional partnerships. Through sharing technology these collaborations enable the development and implementation of solutions including digital health platforms and telemedicine. These technologies and practices are leveraged to address pressing healthcare challenges and empower both healthcare providers and patients. These models aim to improve patient outcomes and reduce costs by focusing on the quality and efficiency of care.

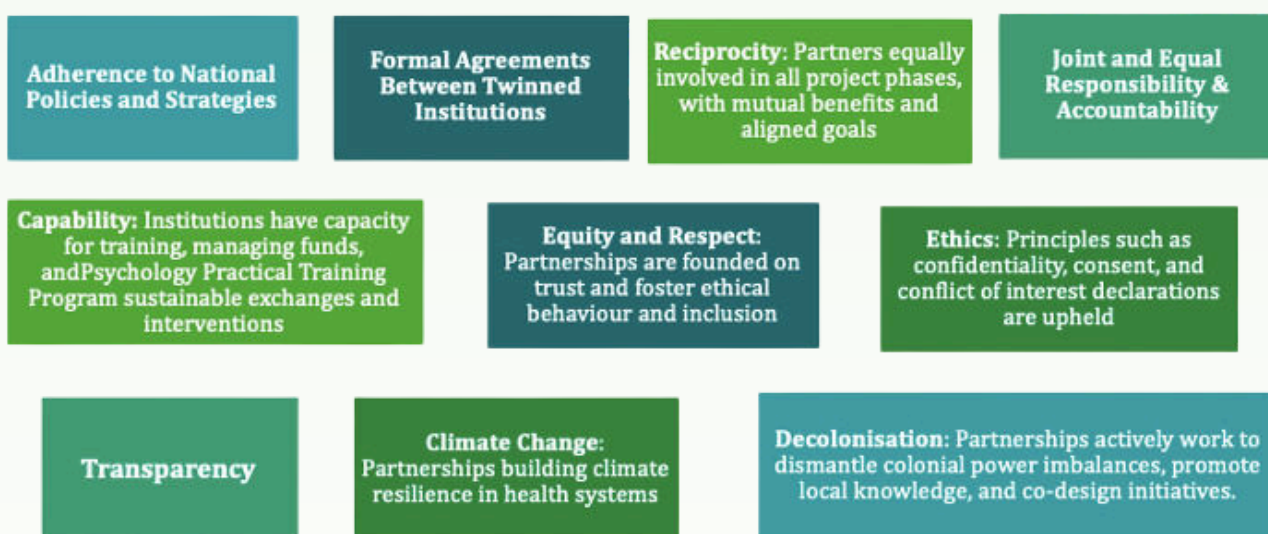
The effectiveness of the IHP approach, was examined in an evaluation of the ESTHER Grants programme in 2023 undertaken by an external consultant. The review found that IHPs by their ability to catalyse the expertise and motivation of committed professionals to create meaningful change through institutional partnerships, even with low levels of resource investment, achieves results equal to or better than those attained through more "traditional" development interventions (Jones, 2023).

Institutional health partnerships contribute to health systems strengthening by enhancing the building blocks defined by the WHO. The areas they predominantly strengthen are; service delivery by improving the quality and accessibility of health services through training and infrastructure support, and; the health workforce by providing education and capacity-building initiatives that improve the skills and retention of healthcare professionals and through peer-to-peer relationships. In this way IHPs strengthen resources and build the capacity that then provides the services. This was demonstrated by an evaluation of the UK Health Partnership Scheme that employed the IHP approach and concluded that “*Projects have contributed to Health Systems Strengthening by strengthening health worker capacity in terms of their skills, knowledge and confidence.*” (DFID, 2016)

PRINCIPLES OF THE IGHN PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAMME

The Principles of the IGHN Partnerships Programme are based upon the ESTHER Charter for Quality of Partnership that sets out standards to ensure the quality of partnerships and increase the impact of interventions in partner countries. Additional principles relate to decolonisation and embedding climate change resilience within our approach. Recognising the interconnectedness of global health challenges, incorporating decolonisation as a guiding principle ensures that global health efforts are more just, equitable, and effective as well as being more culturally appropriate. Our health systems will be increasingly burdened by the health effects of climate change as well as the exacerbation of existing health inequalities. Building climate change resilience into the partnerships will help to mitigate these effects. The individual Principles are outlined in the illustration below:

Principles of the IGHN Partnerships Programme





ROLE OF THE STAKEHOLDERS

The HSE Global Health Programme implements partnerships to improve health services and systems with five countries in Africa (Tanzania, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Sudan and Zambia) at a national level. The HSE also facilitates and supports strategic health partnerships at a service/institutional level in HSE partner countries that link with Irish institutions. They facilitate the donation of decommissioned medical equipment and surplus stocks for humanitarian crisis and other purposes.

The majority of Irish health Institutions within the IGHN Partnerships Programme are from, or linked to, the HSE and the experience of developing and overseeing the ESTHER Programme, has given the HSE Global Health Team a unique understanding of institutional health partnerships. The institutional linkages and health services expertise of the HSE, along with ‘on the ground’ knowledge in certain countries enables the HSE to play an ongoing role in facilitating connections and providing technical guidance to the IGHN Partnerships Programme. The relationship between the IGHN and the HSE is outlined in an MoU, signed annually.

Irish Aid has been the main funder of the programme to date, providing support and financial resources since the establishment of the ESTHER Programme in 2012. Irish Aid are working in many of the countries where the partnerships are operating.

The table below lists Irish Aid and HSE priority countries, and ESTHER grant recipient countries, highlights the four countries (*Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia*) where there is overlap of HSE and Irish Aid countries.

Partnerships comprised of Irish Institutions and their partner institutions in lower- and middle-income countries remain at the heart of the IGHN Partnership Programme. The partnerships supported through the ESTHER Partnerships Programme are in 19 countries of the global South as per the table below.

Irish Aid and HSE priority countries, and ESTHER grant recipient countries

Irish Aid Partner Countries	HSE Global Health Programme Partner Countries	*ESTHER Grant Recipient Countries
Ethiopia (incl health focus)	Ethiopia	Ethiopia (partnership only as part of regional initiatives)
Mozambique (incl health focus)	Mozambique	Mozambique (partnership only as part of regional initiative)
Tanzania (incl health focus)	Tanzania	Tanzania 7 Partnerships
Zambia	Zambia	Zambia 4 Partnerships
	Sudan	Sudan 5 Partnerships
Kenya		Kenya 2 Partnerships
Liberia (incl health focus)		Liberia 1 Partnership
Malawi		Malawi 6 partnerships
Palestine		
Sierra Leone (incl health focus)		Sierra Leone 1 Partnership
South Africa		
Uganda		Uganda 5 Partnerships
Vietnam		
Zimbabwe		Zimbabwe 1 Partnership
Small Island Developing States		

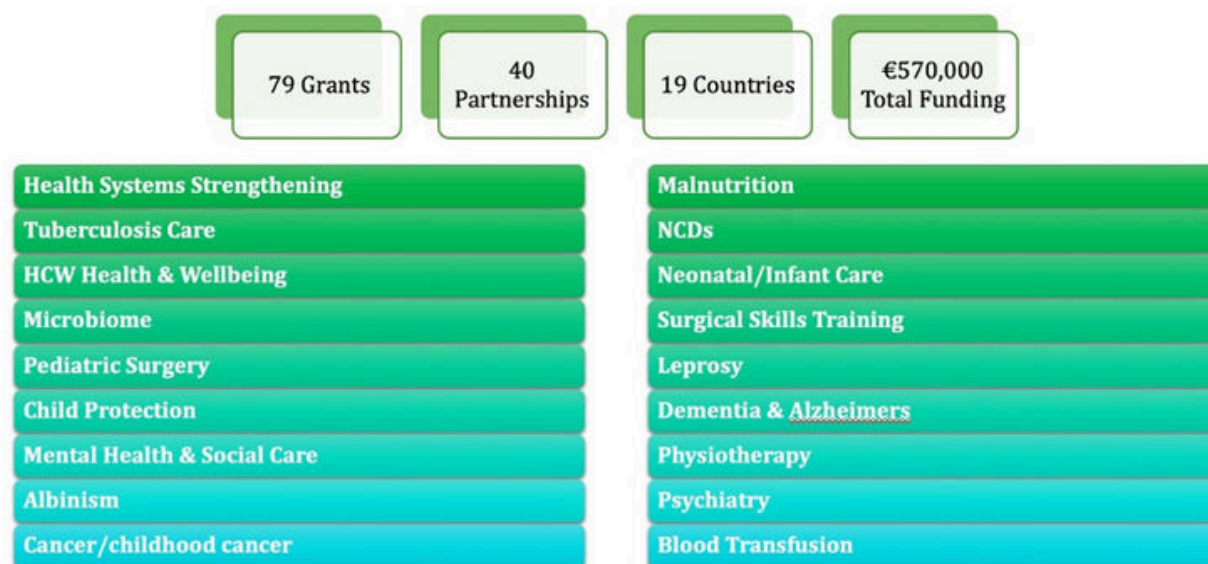
*ESTHER Partnerships are also operating in India (2), Bangladesh (1), Nepal (1), Togo (1), Nigeria (1), Ghana (1), Cambodia (1), South Sudan (1).

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ESTHER PROGRAMME 2012-2023

An evaluation of the grants aspect of the ESTHER programme entitled *An Analysis of the Effectiveness of ESTHER Ireland Grants*, found that there were “a rich diversity of activities within partnership projects funded through ESTHER that have had an impact at a local, district or national level” (Jones, 2023). Given the very small amounts of funding “...many of the achievements under the ESTHER Ireland programme are outstanding” (Jones, 2023).

A key characteristic of all partnerships that received funding was their alignment with national priorities and capacity to strengthen health systems. Between 2014 and 2023, ESTHER Ireland supported health partnerships through 79 grants with total funds of over €570,000. The grants catalysed partnerships, ‘allowing relationships to ‘formalise’ and mature, expanding activities beyond initial ambitions’ (Jones, 2023). These partnerships have also been sustainable over time, remaining impactful way beyond the funding period.

ESTHER Grants 2014 - 2023



According to the findings of the above-mentioned evaluation, ESTHER support activities such as the Partnerships Forum, were deemed fundamental to the success of health partnerships (Jones, 2023). Tools such as the EFECT tool, were also found to be an ‘essential’ resource to support and shape equitable partnerships that ultimately led to greater impacts. Findings also highlighted positive results associated with characteristics of quality partnerships that are contained within the ESTHER standards (ESTHER Charter for Quality of Partnership).

LIMITATIONS OF THE PROGRAMME TO-DATE AND THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE OF THE IGHN PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAMME

The current model has been successful in enabling the development of strong partnerships and instrumental in ensuring partnerships follow best practice from the initial planning stage. Once well established, the main limitation reported by partnerships is that they cannot access further and larger amounts of funding for capacity building initiatives and projects. This can be a lost opportunity at the point that the IHPs have established themselves and are poised to strengthen health services and systems at a national level. While the partnerships have been sustainable over time, even without additional funding from the programme in some instances, there is a missed opportunity to capitalise on their readiness to create meaningful change at a larger scale and depth.

By building on what has been achieved to-date, the IGHN Partnerships Programme can provide a platform to have a more impactful contribution to global health by supporting established partnerships to increase in scope and scale through larger, multi-annual grants. The programme will continue to provide the supportive context for new partnerships to start up and to flourish. New and diversified sources of funding will be required by the IGHN to achieve this.

As an established network, the IGHN is strategically positioned to provide the partnerships programme with the enabling environment and support, particularly in networking and knowledge exchange, and by connecting to, and utilising, the resources of the wider global health community. The Training and Learning Unit within the IGHN will provide enhanced training and learning opportunities for partnerships. These key areas of networking, and training & learning support combine to offer the Partnerships Programme an enabling environment from which to expand its impact.

Vision of the IGFM Partnerships Programme



Our vision for the programme is: "To foster sustainable, equitable, and innovative health partnerships that enhance global health outcomes by empowering institutions, building resilient health systems, and promoting the sharing of knowledge and resources across borders. We support partnerships at all stages of development, from newly formed collaborations to established alliances, ensuring comprehensive support and growth opportunities."



Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority 1: Strengthening Institutional Health Partnerships through Grants

We will provide two grant types aimed at facilitating the development of partnerships for health system strengthening for new and established partnerships.

Grant Types	Purpose and focus of Grant	Individual grant amount
New partnerships	Seed funding for establishment of the partnership	8-10K
Established partnerships	Strengthen the quality of the partnership and capacity of the partnership to demonstrate impact	8-10K

These catalytic grants are designed to provide the initial momentum needed to spur collaboration and innovation, helping to accelerate the development and sustainability of partnerships.

The grant type reflects the stage of development of the partnership seeking a grant. New partnerships are those that have recently started to work together or have taken preliminary steps. The purpose of the grant is seed funding for the establishment of the partnership to fund activities that facilitate the development of a new link or partnership with a counterpart organisation or institution in a low- or middle-income country. Partnerships should demonstrate a commitment to adhere to the Principles of Quality of Partnerships.

Established partnerships are those that are already working together for more than a year and has been formalised, such as through a Memorandum of Understanding. Partnerships must demonstrate clear evidence of quality of partnership, such as receiving Accreditation for Quality of Partnership. The purpose of these grants is to strengthen the quality and capacity of the partnership to demonstrate impact.

A rigorous review of applications will ensure that partnerships selected for funding are committed to the development of a quality partnership, have potential for health systems strengthening and reach the furthest behind.



Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority 2: Supporting Partnerships on Quality of Partnership, Impact Measurement and Sustaining Funding

Building on our established expertise, standards and tools, including the accreditation process, that have been instrumental in building quality partnerships, we will focus on equipping partnerships with the skills to quantify their impact and to source funding. This will ensure that new partnerships will demonstrate quality of partnership such as adherence to principles including reciprocity and equality and will also develop an evidence base for the work of the partnership that will emerge from this strong foundation. With the capacity to demonstrate their impact, and support in fundraising, partnerships will be better placed to source funding to support the long-term sustainability of the partnership.

We are dedicated to enhancing the ability of our partnerships to measure and demonstrate their impact through comprehensive training and support. By equipping partners with the tools and skills necessary for effective monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, as well as guidance on fundraising through grants, philanthropy and private sector support, we will help ensure the sustainability and scalability of their initiatives.

Strategic Priority 3: Establishing New and Diversified Sources of Funding for the IGHN Partnership Programme

To sustain and to grow the programme, and to support mature partnerships with larger, multi-annual grants, a diversity of fundings sources will be required in addition to the annual Irish Aid grant that has supported the previous programme. New sources of funding will enable the programme to support the increasing number of mature partnerships that are poised for greater impact. In addition to identifying, and securing additional funding, the IGHN will work to build the robust systems and processes required to manage and report on larger and multiple funds.

The IGHN will explore engagement with domestic private sector actors, in line with safeguards as outlined in the IGHN policy. New sources of funding will also be sought through philanthropy, grants and IGHN fundraising streams. In addition to identifying, and securing additional funding, the IGHN will work to build the robust systems and processes required to manage and report on larger and multiple funds.

IGHN MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING APPROACH

The strategic focus on monitoring and evaluation is fundamental to the future of the IGHN Partnerships Programme both at the level of the partnerships and the IGHN. In addition to supporting our partnerships, we simultaneously commit to improving our own monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, by increasing our own skills and capacity.

In addition to supporting partnerships to improve quantitative data collection and analysis, we will support learning to improve qualitative data collection that captures the experience of service users and facilitates their voices being heard. This will be as a means of validating the quantitative data and providing a deeper understanding of the context and impact of interventions. We will in this way prioritise the lived experiences and insights of those directly affected, ensuring that their perspectives shape the development and delivery of services.

In conclusion, the IGHN Partnerships Programme Strategy Paper for 2025-2028 outlines a clear commitment to supporting sustainable, impactful health partnerships between Irish institutions and their counterparts in low- and middle-income countries. By prioritising grants for partnership establishment and strengthening, ensuring partnership quality and measurable impact, and diversifying funding sources, the programme is poised to support long-term collaborations that deliver health systems strengthening. These strategic priorities are rooted in a shared vision of equity, reciprocity and long-term commitment aiming to bring about lasting change through this effective and resource efficient model.

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