DIVISION FOR HEALTH SERVICES

Global Health Strategic Plan

Global Health Cluster
2024-2027

Content

"Working in equitable partnerships globally to support and strengthen public health institutions and systems"

Version Control Table

Date	Activity	Involved
27.03.24	First draft based on experiences from the cluster, PEST factors, and ongoing work and obligations	Ane-Marthe S. Skar
12.04.24	Feedback on the draft version	Knut Nyfløt, Kjetil Telle
15.04.24	Presentation and discussion in the Cluster meeting	Cluster members
19.04.24	First final draft. Review and individual feedback.	Cluster members
26.04.24	Development of vision, mission, and values	Cluster members at the division seminar
26.04.24	Updated version of the strategic plan, inc. aims, objectives, vision, mission, and values	All asked to provide feedback
22.08.24	Discussion in cluster seminar: Vision, mission, and values finalized and agreed by all. Recommendations to the aims and objectives provided in group discussions and in plenum.	Cluster members
04.12.24	Review and feedback to updated version based on recommendations from cluster seminar the 22.08	Cluster members
09.12.24	Finalization based on feedback	Ane-Marthe S. Skar
12.03.25	Updating following cluster feedback on the Annual Plan	Ane-Marthe S. Skar
Running	Updates according to internal priorities and PEST factors	All

Introduction to the Strategic Plan

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) plays a pivotal role in global health, focusing on generating knowledge, enhancing preparedness, developing infrastructure, strengthening public health institutions, and shaping policy development. The Global Health Cluster (Helsetjenester global, HTG), organized under the Division for Health Services (Helsetjenester; HT), builds and supports international public health projects related to public health system strengthening and implementation research in close collaboration with priority partner low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The Global Health Cluster´s work spans a broad spectrum of public health domains, with public health system strengthening being at the core, with a significant emphasis on partner country collaboration in LMICs. We believe the best way to build national public health capacity and thus ensure universal health coverage and better health for all is through strong health systems and institutions. We aim to support quality primary healthcare services and contribute to strengthening national public health systems and institutions through cross-sectoral collaboration and the use of rigid and applied research.

According to "Hovedinstruks for Folkehelseinstituttet, Fastsatt av Helse- og omsorgsdepartementet 26.06.2024", NIPH will contribute to the ministry's international work and participate in international health cooperation. The institute will represent Norway's health policy interests in cases where the task is delegated from the ministry"…, and "engage in public debate within our area of responsibility".

The Global Health Strategic Plan outlines current priorities and ambitions for the Global Health Cluster's ongoing work and initiatives, and details where we strive to be by the end of 2027 and how we aim to achieve these long term aims. The Strategic Plan outlines our vision, mission, and values, followed by four overarching aims and the related objectives that will help us work towards meeting each of these aims.

The aims and objectives in the Strategic Plan are informed and shaped by insights from discussion and experience within our Cluster, including experiences from mid-term review of Building Stronger Public Health Institutions and System (BIS) phase I, our research strategy and a SWOT analysis of our research strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. We have also tailored our strategy to be aligned with the strategic plans at the division and NIPH level, as well as political, economic, social, technological; PEST) factors (see Appendix 1). The Division and FHI strategic plans stretches the same period, hence any major revisions in one of the higher-level plans should be followed by a discussion on possible revisions of the Global Health Strategic Plan.

The Global Health Strategic Plan aims to position the Global Health Cluster as a leading presence in Norway for addressing global health challenges through a combination of collaborate efforts with sister public health institutions, robust (implementation) research to help evaluate, inform, and improve intervention- and implementation-based activities, capacity and competence building, and effective implementation and sustainable uptake of evidence-based health interventions and practices.

Strategic Plan Summary

Vision: Our vision is "Sustainable health systems to ensure better health for all."

Mission: Our mission is: "Working in equitable partnerships globally to support and strengthen public health institutions and systems."

We integrate implementation research and implementation practice for health system strengthening. Through collaborative equal partnerships, rigorous implementation research, and effective implementation strategies, we seek to strengthen public health institutions and systems with the knowledge, tools, and practices needed for sustainable improvement and equitable access to healthcare services.

Values: Our values, the foundation of all our contributions and activities, are equitable, respectful, and trustworthy.

Aims and Objectives:
Aim: Build and strengthen sustainable national public health institutions and systems and primary health care services in LMICs.

Objective 1: Conduct and produce high-quality knowledge and (implementation) research in and with LMICs (Please see the Research Strategy).
Objective 2: Further strengthen our capacity within four key areas: a. Digital Health, b. Evidence-Informed Decision Making, c. NCDs, d. Climate and Health
Objective 3: Ensure our work contribute to and fosters health systems that are sustainable (e.g., economically) and resilient to any shocks (e.g., climate, war, epidemics)

The aim and objectives align with the division strategy and NIPH strategy.

Additional focuses include contributing to Norway´s global health agenda, and the integration of a communication and dissemination focus into all our work

What we will prioritize to reach our aims and objectives
To reach our aims and objectives, we have the following four priority objectives:
1. Work actively to support a positive working environment
2. Develop, through professional development and strategic recruitment, strong and resilient teams, including to prioritize and facilitate for professional learning and development in our focus areas
3. Foster collaboration with other parts of NIPH and with external partners
4. Build stronger links between implementation and research activities

Specific actions are detailed in the Annual Cluster Plans. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed when developing new Annual Cluster Plans and updated whenever needed.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

Our vision is to build and strengthen "Sustainable health systems to ensure better health for all."
Our vision is in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 3, aiming for enhanced health for all, specifically, advancing universal health coverage (SDG3.8). The last part of our vision, better health for all, is also the vision for the NIPH.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Universal health coverage (UHC) means that "all people and communities receive the health services (…) they need and of sufficient quality to be effective while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship. The inclusion of UHC in the SDGs presents an opportunity to promote a comprehensive and coherent approach to health, focusing on health systems strengthening." Further, WHO defines health systems based on the following "building blocks": Service delivery, health workforce, health information systems, access to essential medicines, financing, and leadership/governance.

We aim to reduce health disparities and promote inclusive health services that are accessible to all and can serve the needs of every individual. We will work towards the vision of better health for all and combat global health inequality and inequity, both across and within national borders and societal groups and communities. To realise our vision, we will adopt a life-course perspective and focus on leaving no one behind, paying attention to factors such as sex, minority groups, socio-economic factors, early-life exposures, ethnicity, and ability.

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Mission

Our mission is: "Working in equitable partnerships globally to support and strengthen public health institutions and systems". Through fruitful collaborative and respectful partnerships, we develop and apply research and evidence-based interventions and solutions to improve public health.

Values

- Equitable (reducing health disparities and ensuring equal access to health services)
- Respectful (respectful and equal collaboration, respect for cultures and organizations)
- Trustworthy (science-driven, openness, transparency, accountability)

We value and foster equitable, respectful, and trustworthy collaborations to foster mutually beneficial partnerships towards the shared vision of ensuring better health for all. We aim to work according to our values in every aspect of our work, both with partners and with each other.

Figure 1: Global Health Cluster´s Aim and Objectives, and links to division and NIPH strategies

Aim	Objectives	Links to Division strategy	Links to NIPH strategy
Aim: Build and strengthen sustainable national public health institutions and systems and primary health care services in LMICs	Objective 1: Conduct and produce high-quality knowledge and (implementation) research in and with LMICs*	1. Primærhelsetjenestene 1.4 Vi deler vår kunnskap og lærer av andre land	1. God og relevant forskning og kunnskaps-oppsummeringer
	Objective 2: Further strengthen our capacity within four key areas: a. Digital health b. Evidence-Informed Decision Making c. NCDs d. Climate and Health	3. Bærekraftige helsesystemer 3.3 Vi fremskaffer kunnskap og samarbeider om å bygge bærekraftige helsesystemer 2. Tiltak som virker 2.2 Vi fokuserer på sosial ulikhet og undersøker hvem tiltak virker eller ikke virker for 2.3 Vi bistår tjenestene med å lære	1. God og relevant forskning og kunnskaps-oppsummeringer 3. Fremtidsrettet bruk av helsedata
	Objective 3: Ensure our work contribute to and fosters health systems that are sustainable (e.g., economically) and resilient to any shocks (e.g., climate, war, epidemies)	3. Bærekraftige helseystemer 3.3 Vi fremskaffer kunnskap og samarbeider om å bygge bærekraftige helsesystemer	2. God og samordnet beredskap

*Please see our Research Strategy

The values that guide our research is described in our Research Strategy, underscoring that our research should follow the Declaration of Helsinki and the Global Code of Ethics (fairness, respect, care, and honesty), ensure equal authorship, inclusive research, and maximize impact through dissemination, knowledge translation, and sustainability.

Aims and Objectives

To ensure progress towards our vision to build sustainable health systems, we will prioritize innovation, cutting-edge research, technology, and implementation of evidence-based interventions and implementation strategies. We will remain flexible and responsive to changing needs and circumstances, ensuring that our work is relevant, effective, and adaptable. Below follows an overview of the 4 strategic aims and related objectives. The aims express a general sense of direction, and the objectives outline how we intend to approach and focus on the most important outcomes to be achieved. Following the OKR (Objectives and Key Results) and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) tools, the objectives are operationalized into SMART Key Results, set out in the Annual Cluster Plan.

Our aim is to build national and local healthcare capacity by focusing on public health systems and primary health care. More specifically, we will collaborate with partners to develop, gather, and implement knowledge to build or enhance resilient national and local public health capacity and primary healthcare facilities in underserved regions. We will base our work on the best available knowledge and within four key thematic areas (digital health; evidence-informed decision making; NCDs; climate and health) where the specific focus will be identified in collaboration with partners. We will furthermore collaborate with other parts of the NIPH to be able to deliver on infectious disease control, prevention, and management, as well as climate change and health.

The new mandate and profile of the NIPH following the 2023 reorganization provide opportunities to advance research on registries, implementation, and data usage in public health. We should not only be an institute that serves our local community; we must also look outward and engage in global efforts, and our Global Health Strategic Plan aligns with the NIPH and Division strategies. By expanding our focus beyond national borders, we can contribute to and benefit from international collaborations, share our expertise on a broader scale, and address global public health challenges. Additionally, by working globally, we can gain valuable insights and knowledge that can further strengthen our local initiatives, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive and effective public health strategy. As such, our work underscores the interconnectedness of global health, recognizing that public health issues transcend borders and necessitate a unified, global approach.

Objective 1: Conduct and produce high-quality knowledge and research

We aim to prioritize high-quality and innovative research to ensure sustainable and knowledge-supported solutions. We will carry out research on interventions and implementation-related activities for health system capacity strengthening,

e.g., to discover effective strategies and interventions that enhance the uptake and sustainability of health practices by analyzing barriers, facilitators, moderators, and impacts on outcomes with a focus on vulnerable populations. See our Research Strategy for further details.

Objective 2: Further strengthen our capacity within four thematic areas: Digital Health; Evidence-Informed Decision Making; NCDs; Climate and Health

The Global Health Cluster focuses on four key areas: Digital health, Evidence-Informed Decision Making, NCDs, and Climate and Health. These thematic areas will continue to change, evolve, and adapt based on the needs of partner countries and institutions and new funding opportunities. Infectious disease control is also a key area in our implementation projects. This is supported through collaboration with the Division of infectious control.

Why focus on Digital Health?
Our Cluster has a long-standing tradition with high-impact research and implementation of eRegistries, which are important platforms for knowledge utilization, health system decisions, monitoring, and health system strengthening. Innovation, particularly within technology, is key for achieving sustainable advancements within global health, and digital solutions have the potential to increase reach, effectiveness, and reduce costs of health care services. We will prioritize digital health (including eRegistries) and build knowledge on technological innovations for health system strengthening, in close collaboration with other parts of the institute as this is a shared goal as outlined in NIPH and Division strategies.

Why focus on Evidence-Informed Decision Making?
The generation and application of evidence for public health and health system interventions and decisions are key to improving health outcomes on a system level. Building on the experience from the Cluster and the Division with evidence-based decision making, health financing, and health technology assessment (HTA), alongside evidence synthesis, we will prioritize capacity and decision support for evidence-informed decision making, financing, and social participation. Access to and utilization of evidence within policy making is crucial to ensure that decisions are informed by the best available knowledge to enhance health outcomes. Knowledge on evidence-to-decision processes in LMICs

is also important to overcome challenges in generating policy-relevant knowledge and enhancing the demand for and use of evidence in health policy decisions[1]. Furthermore, health is created by individuals and societies, where civil society plays a pivotal role in underserved communities[2].

Why focus on NCDs?
NCDs account for 86% of deaths in LMICs[3] and 75% of people with mental health care needs in LMICs do not have access to care[4]. Gaps in service delivery are a major barrier for achieving universal health coverage. The prevalence of NCDs is increasing, placing a significant burden on health systems. We will prioritize prevention, interventions, and implementation science, which is particularly relevant for the priority area of NCDs[5,6].

Why focus on Climate and Health?
Climate change through increased temperatures, altered rainfall patterns, and extreme weather occurrences poses new and worsening health challenges globally and can lead to a higher incidence of infectious and communicable diseases, along with respiratory conditions and mental health concerns. LMICs are particularly vulnerable to climate-related changes, e.g., due to economic constraints and infrastructure vulnerabilities. The health hazards, exposures, and impacts of climate change are increasing[7] and underscoring the escalating threat to public health which necessitate immediate and coordinated efforts to address and mitigate these risks, as also highlighted by our partner countries.

Expected outcomes (Objectives 1-2)
- I: Enhanced research and knowledge base
- II: Comprehensive integrated health solutions
- III: Strenghtened resilience and adaptive capacity

Objective 3: Ensure our work fosters health systems that are sustainable (e.g., economically) and resilient to any shocks (e.g., climate, war, epidemies)

Public health systems need to be resilient to emerging needs, crises, and climate change, as well as cost-effective and built on evidence, pointing towards a need for increased focus on factors such as climate change, cost-effectiveness, digital health, and evidence-informed decision making, demonstrating the interconnectedness of our work.

Expected outcomes:
- I: Enhanced quality, effectiveness and efficiency of our work
- II: Increased sustainability of our implementation efforts, in particular towards factors related to climate change and emerging health challenges

Additional focuses

Contribute to Norway´s global health agenda
An additional task beyond our three key priorities is related to our role as a global health coordinator and technical expert. Being a Global Health Cluster at the NIPH puts us in a unique position to address global health in a wider context, both within the institute and across Norway. Our Cluster has a highly competent global health team that conducts high-impact research and lead Norad supported health system strengthening projects in several LMICs. We shall strive towards actively enhance our role within Norway's global health sector. We will take lead in interdisciplinary and coordinated global health efforts to maximize impact, be a scientific public health backbone of Norad, and pro-

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1   [Institutional capacity to generate and use evidence in LMICs: current state and opportunities for HPSR | Health Research Policy and Systems](#) | Full Text
2   [World leaders unite to embed social participation in health systems](#) | The BMJ
3   [Non-communicable diseases: can implementation research change the game for policy and practice?](#) - The Lancet
4   [Advancing global mental health diplomacy through a rights-based approach](#) - The Lancet Psychiatry
5   [Non-communicable diseases: can implementation research change the game for policy and practice?](#) - The Lancet
6   [Asking the right question: implementation research to accelerate national non-communicable disease responses](#) | The BMJ
7   [2024 Report Visual Summary](#) - Lancet Countdown
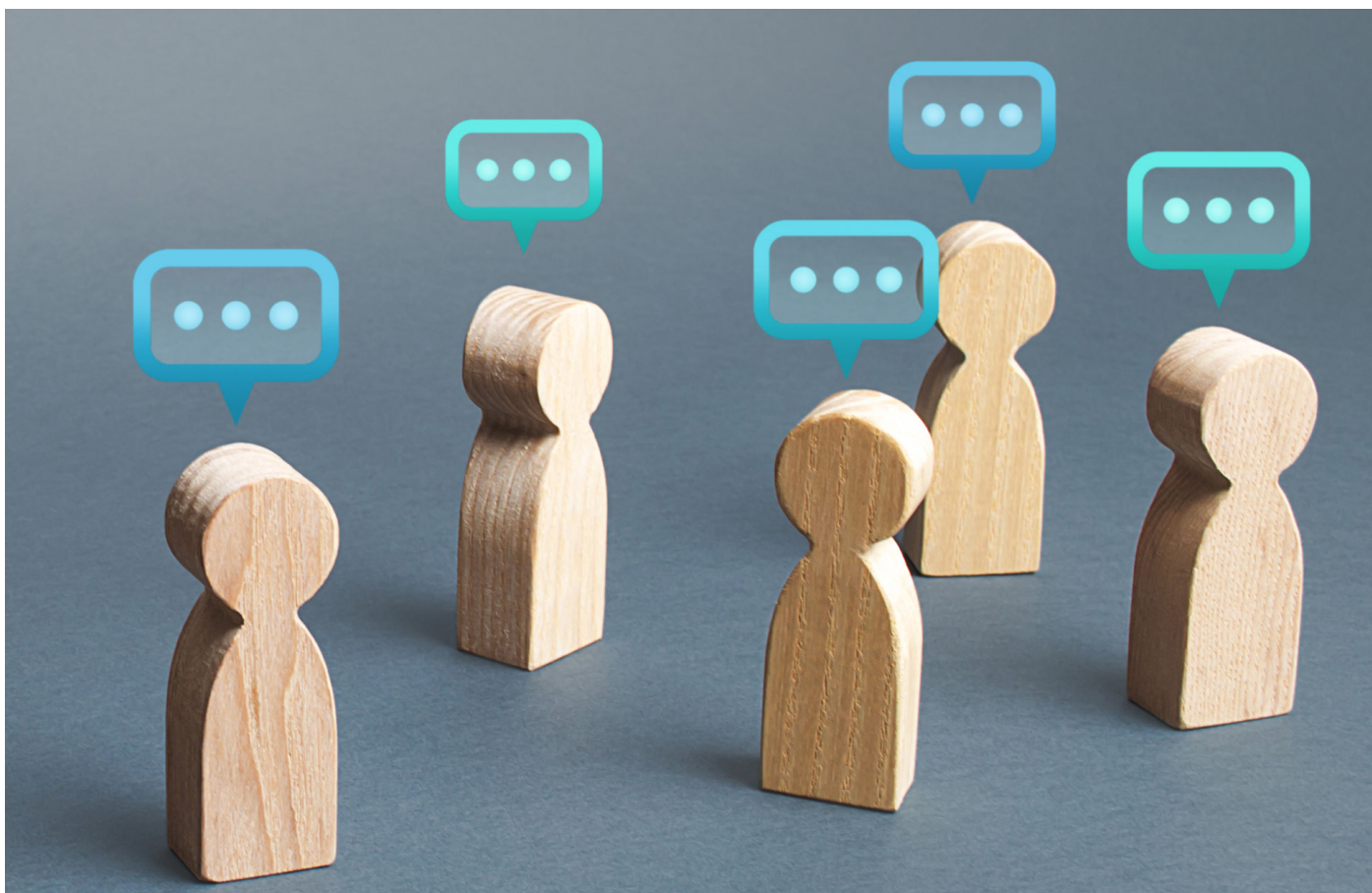
mote and support global health in a Norwegian setting by contributing technical knowledge and expertise to support decision-makers and inform Norway's global health policy.

Expected outcomes:
  I.   Stronger collaborators and coordinated efforts across Norwegian institutions
  II. More visibility on global health issues

Integrate a communication and dissemination focus into all our work

Communication and dissemination of implementation and research findings and other key activities is important to enhance visibility, increase engagement, influence policy and practice, and for building fruitful and lasting partnerships. Communication and dissemination can also strengthen our important coordination role by enhancing engagement and facilitating shared understanding and collaborative efforts.

Expected outcomes:
  I.   Broader reach of our work and contribute to increased focus on global health
  II. Strengthened networks, partnerships, and stakeholder engagement

What we will prioritize to reach our aims and objectives

To reach our aims and objectives, we have the following four priority focus areas:
  1. Work actively to support a positive working environment
  2. Develop, through professional development and strategic recruitment, strong and resilient teams, including prioritize and facilitate for professional learning and development in our focus areas
  3. Foster collaboration with other parts of NIPH and with external partners
  4. Build stronger links between implementation and research activities

The foundation of our Cluster is our people. A positive work environment is important for all employees to thrive. We will follow up the process and develop an action and implementation plan following the Agenda Kaupang process (autumn 2024) to strengthen the working environment. Strong and resilient teams will enable more effective problem-solving through diverse expertise and leave us less vulnerable, e.g., when facing increased demands or staff turnover. Further, ongoing professional development ensures that team members stay current and capable, fostering an environment of growth and learning that benefits both individual careers and our common strategic goals. We will also actively work towards more and closer collaboration, when deemed necessary, between implementation and research activities in the cluster. The priorities have support in both the Division strategy (" Videreutvikle oss som medarbeidere») and the NIPH strategy ("Internt mål: En veldrevet organisasjon»).

Focus area 1: Work actively to support a positive working environment

During the strategic period, a primary focus will be the development and follow-up of actions aimed at enhancing the working environment. After two years of reorganization and downsizing, an organizational psychologist from Agenda Kaupang conducted one-on-one conversations with all cluster members in mid-2024. This process was followed by a comprehensive report and a seminar in December 2024, which helped identify key priorities based on the report's findings and discussions from the seminar. Throughout the strategic period, the implementation of these priority action points will be given special emphasis.

Focus area 2: Develop, through professional development and strategic recruitment, strong and resilient teams, including prioritize and facilitate for professional learning and development in our focus areas

The years of downsizing and reorganization prior to the period covered by the Strategic Plan left us with small and fragmented teams which pose a threat to personal wellbeing, ability to deliver, and productivity. It will be a key priority to build strong and resilient teams, so that the ability to meet and achieve deliverables and/or intended outcomes does not become reliant on individual team members. Skill development and professional development opportunities are important to foster employee satisfaction while ensuring that we always have the competencies needed to meet our objectives. As we are a multidisciplinary team and work on several projects across different countries, it might be particularly important to foster professional learning and development, and a strong sense of a community.

Expected outcomes (Focus areas 1-2):
    I.   A positive working environment focused on collaboration
    II. Motivated team members that can learn, thrive, and develop
    III. Improved staff wellbeing
    IV. Improved project management
    V. Enhanced quality of deliverables

Focus area 3: Foster collaboration with other parts of NIPH and with external partners

The Global Health Cluster is a HUB representing all of NIPH and needs close collaboration with other divisions and clusters to provide resources and competence in our global work on behalf of NIPH. Many of our public health sister

institutions request collaboration and assistance on infectious disease control, lab capacity and other areas outside the key competencies of the Global Health Cluster and the Division for Health Services. To ensure that we can deliver on important topics extending the topics of priority in our cluster, a close collaboration with other parts of the NIPH is essential. We have already established collaborations with the Division for Climate and Environment, and the Division for Infectious Diseases. During this strategic period, we will further strengthen this collaboration, with an increased focus on leadership alignment, ownership, and investment, as well as build stronger links to the Division for Prevention and Public Health. In particular we will be teaming up with other environments at the NIPH that work with health registries.

Expected outcomes:
  I.   Improved ability to meet partner organisations needs
  II.   More resilient teams through resource sharing and knowledge exchange
  III. Ensuring long-term resources and priorities for global projects at NIPH
  IV. Increased impact and credibility

Focus area 4: Build stronger links between implementation and research activities

We have two departments in the Global Health Cluster, namely research and implementation. Employees often work across the two main thematic departments/areas, yet we see a need for strengthening collaboration and synergies. Given the close interplay between research, implementation, and collaboration with partner countries, enhancing internal collaboration and creating synergies is a strategic priority.

Expected outcomes:
  I.   Research-supported implementation and relevant research questions
  II. Narrowing the gap between research and practice
  III. Synergies that can save us time and resources