

Fostering Global Health through equitable partnerships. Insights from the International Global Health Partnership Forum

Barcelona, CosmoCaixa, November 2023

Executive Summary

The International Global Health Partnership Forum 2023, hosted by ISGlobal, convened diverse stakeholders to address complex challenges in global health amidst unprecedented global crises. Central to the discussion was the recognition of robust leadership and equitable partnerships as indispensable in navigating the current landscape. Key objectives included fostering discussion, debate, and analysis on current challenges in global health, while providing feedback for ISGlobal's Strategy up to 2027.

The forum emphasized the importance of multilateral partnerships and collaboration across borders, ideologies, and disciplines. The keynote speech highlighted Africa's pivotal role in global health and the necessity for decolonization approaches. Discussion panels explored effective preparedness models, future scientific landscapes, and integrated approaches to address health crises.

Recommendations prioritize equity in partnerships, health diplomacy, international collaboration in research and development, sustainable policies addressing climate and health, and strengthening preparedness for health crises. ISGlobal's new strategy aligns with these objectives, emphasizing equitable partnerships, interdisciplinary approaches, and leadership development.

In conclusion, the forum underscores the urgent need for action amidst global challenges. Collaboration, equity, and innovation are highlighted as essential for building a healthier world. The insights gathered serve as a roadmap for future endeavours, guiding ISGlobal and the broader global health community in their mission to foster health as a human right.

Introduction

The past few years have presented our world with unprecedented challenges. The climate crisis, a global pandemic, a mounting crisis of debt, and armed conflicts, among others, have profoundly shaken the geopolitical landscape, every country's economy, and the very notion of security in our societies. Global health is no exception. Despite the remarkable advances achieved in areas such as average life expectancy or maternal mortality worldwide, the complexity of the "Multi-Crisis Era," as many are already calling it, has left the global health community searching for ways to navigate an unfamiliar and ever-changing scenario. In this context, robust leadership and strong, equitable partnerships emerge as key pathways to success.

Genuine leadership in this context transcends borders, ideologies, and disciplines. It involves a collective commitment to fostering equitable access to health, promoting resilience, and addressing cross-border concerns that affect communities worldwide. It acknowledges that the health of one nation profoundly impacts the well-being of others. Multilateral partnerships are essential to face the challenges ahead, recognizing that no single entity holds the solution to our global health dilemmas. These partnerships also function as laboratories of innovation, where ideas converge and spark transformative solutions.

This is the foundation upon which the International Global Health Partnership Forum 2023 was established. ISGlobal sought to gather a diverse group of global health stakeholders, fostering discussion, debate, and analysis on the current challenges in global health, as well as on our overall upcoming Strategy up to 2027. The ultimate objective was to strengthen existing alliances and forge new partnerships to navigate the current landscape of our discipline.

Leveraging partnerships to face Global Health challenges

The forum took place on November 28, 2023, at CosmoCaixa Barcelona, pivoting around ISGlobal's strategic outlook towards 2027 and featuring panels that delved into effective preparedness models, future scientific landscapes, and an integrated approach to address the planet's health crisis.

Following an institutional welcome by **HRH the Infanta Cristina of Spain**, Director of the International Area of the "la Caixa" Foundation and President of the Board of Trustees of ISGlobal, **Dr. Carmen Cabezas**, Secretary of Public Health of Generalitat de Catalunya, and **Mr. Antón Leis**, Director of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, the event commenced with **Dr. Antoni Plasència**, as outgoing General Director of ISGlobal, and **Dr. Denise Naniche**, Scientific Director, providing an overview of ISGlobal's progress and achievements in the last 6 years and its Strategy until 2027, to be approved in early 2024. Its key priorities include reducing infectious diseases, preventing and controlling non-communicable diseases (NCDs), addressing the climate crisis sustainably, improving maternal and child health in less developed countries (LMCs), and enhancing preparedness through a holistic approach guided by science and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The keynote speech was delivered by **Dr. Samba Sow**, General Director of the Institut National de Santé Publique Mali and CVD-Mali. Dr. Sow delivered a thought-provoking address on "Reimagining global health in the post-COVID era: An African perspective amidst geopolitical uncertainty." Central to his speech was the pivotal role Africa plays in global health, advocating for the continent to become an equal and active partner, emerging as a key player. Sow stressed the necessity for decolonization approaches to achieve this vision, emphasizing the critical role of equity in fostering enduring partnerships. Additionally, he outlined "Africa's vision for health," emphasizing the importance of resilience and self-sufficiency, and addressed the need for support focused on empowerment, lasting improvements, and a stronger health foundation in Africa. Dr. Sow underscored the significance of training and capacity building to cultivate a robust workforce, the importance of culturally sensitive and locally applicable healthcare solutions, and the imperative of directing research and development efforts toward local innovations as a core element of an effective strategy.

Discussion panels

The Forum was centered around three discussion panels.

PANEL 1: Searching for an Effective and Equitable Preparedness Model in the Era of Systemic Health Crises

The panel delved into the intricacies of systemic health crises, aiming to understand the complexities of emergency preparedness and response. Discussions focused on the challenges spanning scientific, financial, institutional, and legal aspects of preparedness models, reflecting on the lessons gleaned from COVID-19 and underscoring the central role of science in addressing these crises. **Elisabeth Cardis** (ISGlobal) introduced the topic, and panel participants included **Helena Legido-Quigley** (Imperial College London), **Katherine Ginsbach** (O'Neill Institute), and **Oliver Morgan** (WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence). **Gonzalo Fanjul** (ISGlobal) moderated the panel.

Throughout the discussion, there was a poignant emphasis on the inadequacy of proposed measures to address vaccine access inequality. The crucial role of trust in leadership was underscored, with a spotlight on building in-country capacities, emphasizing that institutions are only as robust as the individuals who construct them. The conversation also brought forth a warning about underestimating risks, emphasizing the need for a multidisciplinary, all-hazards approach.

The discussion highlighted the role of leadership in collaboration with research, emphasizing progress through mutual learning and international cooperation. A suggestion was made that not every country needs its vaccine factories, advocating for regional hubs instead. Warnings were issued about potential forthcoming crises, emphasizing the importance of preparedness, and the significance of civil society capacities was reiterated.

PANEL 2: Opportunities and Needs in the Future Scientific Landscape of Global Health. Insights from the Global South

This panel convened experts and leaders in the global health field to delve into the impact of contemporary cutting-edge scientific advancements on global health, with a specific focus on the often-overlooked perspective of the Global South. **Quique Bassat** (ISGlobal) introduced the topic, and participants included **Carla de Freitas** (Fundação Oswaldo Cruz), **Martinho do Carmo Dgedge** (Fundação Manhiça), and **Phillipe Duneton** (UNITAID). **Adelaida Sarukhan** (ISGlobal) moderated the session.

The discussion showcased various examples underscoring the importance of the One Health approach, particularly highlighting the significance of the Animal Health issue in this approach. Acknowledging that infectious diseases such as Malaria, Tuberculosis, and HIV remain leading causes of death in Africa, while NCDs like diabetes and cancer are on the rise, the panel also noted the resurgence of cholera. Optimism about the potential of AI was expressed cautiously, emphasizing responsible usage.

In subsequent exchanges, the importance of access to oxygen for preparedness in the face of future pandemics was emphasized. The discussion touched on the influence and importance of the market and the commercial determinants of health, stressing that a sustainable network is key in addressing health challenges.

Discussion panels

PANEL 3: An Integrated Approach to Address the Planet's Health Crisis

This panel sought to explore the current status of planetary boundaries, the intersection of climate and health, the challenges posed by zoonotic diseases through the One Health perspective, and the concept of planetary health. Led by **Ivana Cvijanovic** (ISGlobal), participants included **Benoît Miribel** (One Sustainable Health for All Foundation), **David Savitz** (Brown University), **Fernando Valladares** (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas), and **María Neira** (Department of Public Health and Environment, WHO), who participated online. **Cathryn Tonne** (ISGlobal) moderated this panel.

It was emphasized that the impact of climate change extends beyond climate-related issues, challenging the ongoing economic-first approach as hypocritical. Notably, health has been placed on the agenda of the COP for the first time, underscoring the significant influence of climate change on health. A call was made to discontinue support for fossil fuels, and the interconnected nature of global issues was highlighted, urging judicious use of this understanding. Subsequently, discussions arose about the reluctance to share vaccines, suggesting monetary interests play a role, and there was a stressed need for enhanced research capacity.

Dr. Annette Peters, Chair of the External Advisory Committee at ISGlobal, along with **Dr. Quique Bassat**, as incoming General Director of ISGlobal, concluded the event. Dr. Peters highlighted the most important results and conclusions of the 1st International Global Health Partnership Forum. He emphasized the value of the advisory role of the Forum, being a space for dialogue between very different actors with varying perspectives of Global Health. This is particularly true with regard to ISGlobal's new strategy, presented that day, which ultimately benefited from the discussions that took place at the Forum. Dr. Bassat emphasized his commitment to ensure the continuity of this partnership platform in coming years, preserving its advisory role and the objective to bring together a group of multidisciplinary stakeholders to discuss pressing challenges in Global Health.

Recommendations

Building on the insights of the discussions on the forum, the Global Health community should:

- Prioritize equity in Global Health partnerships: Ensure that all global health partnerships prioritize equitable access to resources, opportunities, and healthcare solutions. Implement initiatives that empower local communities, particularly in regions where health disparities are most pronounced, fostering enduring partnerships grounded in mutual respect and shared goals. These principles will guide ISGlobal as the institution continues to stimulate and nurture its longstanding collaborations in LMICs. The new strategy includes aims such as “Identify and develop new collaboration opportunities within international partners whilst adhering to principles of equitable partnerships, which include respect, reciprocity, and commitment to strengthening capacities in LMICs”.
- Promote health diplomacy and multisectoral collaboration: Encourage governments to prioritize health in their foreign policies and engage in dialogue and negotiation to advance shared health goals. Foster partnerships with sectors outside of traditional healthcare, such as education, agriculture, and transportation, to address global health challenges holistically. This integrative and interdisciplinary approach is a cross-cutting value for ISGlobal's current Strategy until 2027.

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- Enhance international collaboration on research and development: Emphasize the One Health/Planetary Health approach in research and development efforts, fostering collaboration across disciplines and borders to address the interconnected nature of health challenges. International collaboration is at the heart of ISGlobal's work, and will be pivotal to its objectives in this new strategic cycle.
 - Address the intersection of climate and health through sustainable policies: Create actionable policies that prioritize sustainability and resilience. Advocate for sustainable practices and policies that mitigate the health impacts of climate change, including transitioning away from fossil fuels and promoting renewable energy sources. Recognize the interconnected nature of global challenges and work collaboratively to address them with urgency and determination. The work on both research and policy analysis in climate change is part of ISGlobal's new Strategy, with specific aims like "Analyse which interventions and policies promote healthy, equitable, and sustainable urban environments".
 - Strengthen preparedness for systemic health crises: Prioritize building in-country capacities to respond to systemic health crises. Foster trust in leadership through transparent communication and inclusive decision-making processes. Invest in training and capacity-building initiatives to cultivate a resilient workforce capable of swift and effective responses to emergencies. Encourage the establishment of regional hubs for vaccine production and distribution to ensure equitable access and preparedness for future pandemics. This line of work is reflected in ISGlobal's new Strategy, that aims to "Expand preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience activities by using an all-hazards approach".
 - Foster leadership development and accountability: Invest in leadership training programs and initiatives aimed at developing the skills and competencies necessary for effective crisis management and collaboration. Promote accountability among leaders by establishing transparent decision-making processes and mechanisms for evaluating and reporting progress towards shared goals. Strong leadership is essential for inspiring confidence, mobilizing resources, and driving collective action towards addressing global health challenges effectively. Fairness, accountability and transparency are pivotal values for ISGlobal and its new Strategy.

Conclusion

As the International Global Health Partnership Forum 2023 ends, a clear message resonates: the challenges we face demand action. In a world grappling with crises on multiple fronts, collaboration emerges as our strongest asset. Through equitable partnerships and innovative approaches, we have the potential to tackle even the most daunting challenges. Let us prioritize equity, diplomacy, and scientific advancement in our pursuit of a healthier world, as envisaged in the ISGlobal strategy. The insights gleaned from this forum serve as a roadmap for the journey ahead, and will continue to inform the work of our institution. By working together, across borders and disciplines, we can build a future where health is, once and for all, a universal right.

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