

CCGHR Partnership Strategy ¹

1. CCGHR & Partnership: An Overview

Forming and strengthening mutually beneficial and collaborative partnerships between and amongst Canadian and LMIC-based institutions is a key outcome to which CCGHR's work contributes. 'Partnering' is also a core supporting strategy² through which the Coalition aims to achieve goals related to each of its Strategic Priorities, as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2010-2014. From its Secretariat, the Coalition pursues partnerships in order to expand, enrich and deepen its approach, to execute its programming, to incubate emerging ideas, to influence policy, and to create critical, multidisciplinary clusters of global health experts and expertise.

The Coalition works with and through its partners to promote better and more equitable health worldwide through the production and use of knowledge. With and through its partners, the Coalition networks, facilitates, coordinates and strengthens capacity, regularly drawing upon, complementing and strengthening partners' skills and expertise. The Coalition believes that it is only through effective partnering that it can contribute to sustainable, locally owned development.

The Coalition engages in 'partnering' in two key ways:

- *The Coalition establishes or engages in partnerships directly as a vehicle through which to deliver innovative programming and achieve its goals.*
- *The Coalition facilitates or supports partnering between and amongst individuals and/or institutions engaged in the health research field in Canada, LMICs and elsewhere.*

To support the important role of partnering within the Coalition, the "Building Partnerships Task Group" was formed in 2004; it has served as a significant resource providing expertise and support to critical aspects of CCGHR's partnering efforts.

This document outlines who the Coalition's partners are, how CCGHR engages in partnering and what it hopes to achieve by doing so. For key principles underpinning the Coalition's approach to partnership, please see the accompanying CCGHR Partnership Policy.³

2. How CCGHR Partners

The Coalition engages in 'partnering' in two key ways, roughly corresponding to the Coalition's modalities of "doing" through direct programming and "facilitating" through its brokering and assistance to other individuals and institutions.

2.1 The Coalition establishes or engages in partnerships directly as a key vehicle through which to deliver programming and achieve programming goals

¹ Approved by the CCGHR Board of Directors, June 2009

² 'Partnering' is one of the Coalition's core 'supporting strategies' described in its Strategic Plan (Section 5), along with learning and communicating.

³ CCGHR's Partnership Policy was developed with guidance from the Building Partnerships Task Group.

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One key way the Coalition does this is through the establishment of inter-institutional relationships between the Coalition and a range of Canadian or LMIC-based institutions or agencies (including networks), and can include signing memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or entering into formal collaboration agreements. The partnerships may be formed around a specific collaboration with specific goals in mind – such as the Coalition’s partnership with ZAMFOHR (see *textbox*) – or be broader in scope. An example of the latter could include CCGHR’s partnerships with Canadian funding agencies, where partnering is not only about an exchange of funds, but about the mutual exchange of knowledge, networks and capacities. In this context, “partnership” refers to the intentional formation of an inter-institutional relationship, whether informal or formal, for a specific purpose.

A second key way that the Coalition partners directly in support of its programming is through the identification of ‘partner LMICs’, around which CCGHR focuses its international programming. The Country Focus Strategy (CFS) originated in 2004 with the CCGHR’s Task Group on Strengthening National Health Research Systems (TG SNHRS) dedicated to exploring how Canadian contributions could strengthen national health research systems.⁴ In this context, “partnership” refers to the Coalition’s strategic and intentional collaboration with particular LMICs to advance national health research goals. This may entail the development of inter-institutional partnerships with Canadian, LMIC or other institutions working on health research in a given country.

CCGHR-Zamfohr partnership:

The CCGHR has established a partnership with the Zambia Forum for Health Research (ZAMFOHR), a recently established NGO that aims to strengthen the capacity to undertake research and utilize evidence in health policy and practice in Zambia. Through this partnership, CCGHR aims to support ZAMFOHR to become an effective and sustainable “knowledge translation platform” that actively networks and partners with local and international actors. A 2007 ZAMFOHR-CCGHR MOU underscores their shared vision and direction, and outlines general areas of activity and exchange. In April 2008, this included direct CCGHR support for a human resources for health (HRH) research workshop, at which three specific research programmes were developed. In 2009, CCGHR is supporting ZAMFOHR in the launch of the “Zambia Fellowship Program” (ZFP) where a cohort of Zambian colleagues will receive training in the use of knowledge translation tools and strategies. Two of the top fellows will travel to Canada each year to receive additional training and mentoring with an expert in the fellow’s field. The CCGHR is also assisting ZAMFOHR in developing a project and management structure, in mobilizing resources, and in developing a Resource Centre.

2.2 The Coalition facilitates or supports partnering between and amongst individuals and/or institutions engaged in health research in Canada, LMICs and elsewhere

⁴ The countries included in the CFS to date have been selected to reflect Canadian investments in these countries by Canadian funding agencies and other stakeholders, as well as to represent different world regions. Though the nature and extent of efforts has varied for each, CFS “partner” countries to date include Bolivia, Mali, Mongolia, and Zambia.

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CCGHR's support for, or facilitation of, partnerships is primarily provided to its members – individuals that represent research teams usually within Canadian or LMIC-based universities. This support is offered through bringing different actors together - i.e. networking and brokering - and, through direct knowledge exchange, providing guidance on “good practices” and principles for effective, respectful, mutually-beneficial and sustainable partnerships. The Coalition also strives to demonstrate or model good practices of partnership through its own direct partnering efforts.

3. CCGHR's Partners

The key types of organizations with which the Coalition partners include:

- National and/or international **non-governmental organizations**.⁵ Examples include the Canadian Society for International Health (CSIH), The Zambia Forum for Health Research (ZAMFOHR) and the Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED)
- Agencies or **funders of global health research**. Examples include the Global Health Research Initiative (GHRI), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
- **Universities, research institutions** and/or particular departments or units within these institutions (in Canada and partner LMICs).
- **Government** ministries, departments, councils, commissions, committees and parastatals (primarily within partner LMICs).

The Coalition does not enter into partnership agreements with individuals. At this level, the Coalition works primarily to create partnerships between and amongst leading individuals in particular domains of health research. While the Coalition is comprised of individual members (which in turn brings in an array of institutions, organizations and agencies), membership itself does not imply a partnership between the Coalition and the institutions the members represent.

4. Goals of Coalition Partnerships

The Coalition's partnering efforts are a central means by which the Coalition achieves the “Strategic Priorities” as outlined in the Strategic Plan (2010-2014):

- Strengthening the capacity of global health researchers;
- Coordinating, brokering and strengthening capacity among global, national and local researchers and research-users in the non-technical aspects of research;
- Developing and promoting mechanisms to influence the policy process.

For further elaboration on how CCGHR's partnering efforts contribute to these goals, please see the CCGHR Strategic Plan (2010-2014).

⁵ This could also include “networks”.

Partner Assessment Tool [an example]

The tool leads the user through a simple step-by-step questionnaire assessing the expected value of a partnership and identifies ways to improve future partnership activities. It can be used to assess preparedness, to identify opportunities for early adjustment, and to position for successful project implementation.

The PAT contributes to: informed decision-making; enabling partners to better capitalize on opportunities to add value to partnership projects; increasing return-on-investment; aligning and clarifying objectives and responsibilities; systematically articulating and communicating the value of partnership projects; focusing on the long-term economic, environmental and social impacts of the partnership; and developing and designing successful partnership projects with positive development effects.

Source: United Nations Global Compact. "Partnerships for Development". Available at: <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/issues/partnerships/pat.html>

5. Evaluation, Learning and Accountability

As an organization committed to evaluative thinking and learning, an integral part of the Coalition's Partnership Strategy is evaluation and learning. Through all of its partnering efforts – whether the partnering in which the Coalition is directly engaged or that which the Coalition facilitates – CCGHR will work to monitor, collate lessons learned and share experiences about partnering amongst its partners, members and wider networks.

Participatory evaluation and monitoring processes and tools will be used to support the integration of lessons learned into ongoing partnerships and help strengthen partnerships so that they adhere to CCGHR's principles of partnership and contribute to thriving, sustainable, equitable and mutually-beneficial partnerships between and amongst Canadian and LMIC-based institutions. These tools include a Partnership Assessment Tool (PAT), currently under development, which will support the evaluation of partnerships at various key moments in a partnership or collaboration: Inception, Implementation, Dissemination and Wrapping-up.⁶

The Partnering & Networking Resource Group as part of the CCGHR's Strategic Plan will support the Coalition in all aspects of its evolution, evaluation and learning around partnering.

6. Principles of Partnering

The key principles underpinning CCGHR's approach to partnering is outlined in the corresponding CCGHR Partnership Policy (appended).

⁶ This is drawn from the Summary Report, African Regional Consultation on Building Effective and Sustainable Partnerships for Global Health Research, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, March 16th-18th, 2009.

CCGHR Partnership Policy ⁷

As one of the three core strategies supporting its various programs, ‘partnering’ is a key modality through which the Coalition operates. From its Secretariat, the Coalition pursues partnerships in order to expand, enrich and deepen its approach, to execute its programming, to incubate emerging ideas, to influence policy, and to create critical, multidisciplinary clusters of global health experts and expertise.

The Coalition works with and through its partners to promote better and more equitable health worldwide through the production and use of knowledge. With and through its partners, the Coalition networks, facilitates, coordinates and strengthens capacity, regularly drawing upon, complementing and strengthening partners’ skills and expertise. The Coalition believes that it is only through effective partnering that it can contribute to sustainable, locally-owned development.

The following outlines the principles and values that inform and infuse all of the Coalition’s partnerships.⁸ The Coalition strongly encourages its members, partners and other stakeholders to adopt these principles in developing and deepening any partnership efforts.

1. Shared Values

The Coalition engages in partnerships with institutions that share a compatible set of goals and values. All must have the desire to work towards a common position or outcome on important, agreed-upon issues. As outlined in its 2010-2014 Strategic Plan, the Coalition’s primary values include an emphasis on:

- **equity.** *The Coalition is dedicated to advancing knowledge-informed solutions that work to reduce disparities, redistribute social, political and economic resources, and increase individual and collective choice.*
- **global health research as a unique contributor to equity.** *In examining and emphasizing equity, the Coalition believes that global health research is a critical tool for achieving fair and just health outcomes for all.*
- **inclusiveness and collaboration.** *The Coalition seeks to embrace and involve the full range of actors who produce, fund, translate and apply global health research to improve global health.*
- **learning.** *As a learning organization, the Coalition is committed to the principles of “evaluative thinking,” routinely seeking to understand, document and review its performance in order to continually improve upon it.*
- **locally-owned and locally-driven initiatives.** *In response to elaborated needs, the Coalition strives to strengthen national health research systems in LMICs.*

⁷ This document was prepared by Rebecca Nelems and Sandy Campbell (CCGHR consultants), along with Vic Neufeld, and with additional contributions from members of CCGHR’s Task Group on Building Partnerships.

⁸ These principles are derived in part from the work of the CCGHR Task Group on Building Partnerships. Also helpful was a policy document developed by Oxfam UK. 2007. “Working with Others”. Available at:

http://www.ain.org.np/partnership_docs/Oxfam%20GB%20partnership_policy_booklet.pdf

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- **leadership for change.** *The Coalition brings its collective experience and knowledge and invests in leaders who can push for knowledge-informed change.*
- **gender.** The Coalition believes that understanding and integrating gender equality issues in all aspects of its work is key to its broader equity goals.

2. Mutual Respect

The Coalition demonstrates respect for its partners' views and "style," and seeks the same from its partners. By ensuring open dialogue, the Coalition encourages a spirit of mutual respect so that all may communicate freely about any partnership issues.

3. Complimentarity:

The Coalition recognizes that it can only reach its goals through working in close partnership with other organizations. The unique qualities, expertise and 'added value' that each party respectively brings to its partnerships is clearly identified and acknowledged in any partnership documents.

3. Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities

The Coalition is committed to ensuring that all roles and responsibilities are openly and transparently negotiated and agreed upon at the beginning of the partnership. This includes the process of making decisions, lines of accountability, and managing shared resources. This also pertains to the specific contributions of each party, in terms of human, financial and/or technical resources. This is done either formally (e.g. a Memorandum of Understanding) or informally (e.g. meeting minutes). The Coalition is committed to resolving any problems or challenges that arise in the partnership through the use of an agreed-upon dispute resolution mechanism.

5. Effectiveness:

In its actions as a partner, the Coalition draws upon and demonstrates the best available evidence for effective partnerships. The Coalition expects that every partnership will contribute to the literature on "good practices" in partnering (with specific attention to modality, outcome and impact)

6. Commitment to learning together

The Coalition is committed to a learning agenda upon entering into any partnership. This includes an agreed-upon dialogue process and a willingness to give and receive constructive criticism, so that partners can celebrate successes together and learn together from mistakes and failures.