

# Report

## A Decade of Emerging Voices: Looking at Past, Present and Future

Evaluation Period	October 2020 – March 2021
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Capacity  
Development  
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Report dated March 2020

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## ACRONYMS

BMJ	BMJ journal
CDI	Capacity Development International
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DGD	Directorate-General Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (Belgium)
ECR	Early Career Researcher
EV4GH	Emerging Voices for Global Health
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GH	Global Health
GN	Global North
GS	Global South
HIC	High Income Country
HPSR	Health Policy and Systems Research
HSG	Health Systems Global
HSR	Health Systems Research
HSRS	Health Systems Research Symposium
ICASA	International Conference on AIDS and STIs
IHP	International Health Policies (weekly newsletter/digest of key global health reads)
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPH	Institute of Public Health (Bangalore)
ITM	Institute of Tropical Medicine (Antwerp)
LMIC	Low and Middle Income Country
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoH	Ministry of Health
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SHAPES	Social Science Approaches for Research and Engagement in Health Policy and Systems
ToC	Theory of Change
TWG	Thematic Working Group (of Health Systems Global)
WHO	World Health Organisation

## DEFINITIONS

Alumni	Refers to EVs who have completed the training component of the initiative
EVs	Refers to both alumni and participants from the current cohort
Google Group	Refers to HPSR information and exchange email group, curated by ITM
HSRS	Refers to the biennial global research symposium of Health Systems Global
Initiative	Refers to EV4GH training programme and network
Participants	Refers to current EV cohort attending the training component
Partner	Refers to co-hosts of face to face EV training and Health Systems Global (HSG)
Stakeholder	Refers to individuals working within the broader health policy and systems research community

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The underlying premise of the Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) Programme is a 'disruptive idea': to give a voice to young researchers and researcher/activists from the global south through an innovative, catalysing blended programme of learning and peer support. This is linked to the Health Systems Global (HSG) biennial health systems research symposium (HSRS), where participants immediately apply their learning and skills. Since its initiation in 2010, EV4GH has always been about giving voice, particularly to underrepresented groups, to enable them to shift discourses and paradigms using evidence. An equity focus has been embedded within the initiative through the application of gender and power lenses, and a more recent focus on decolonisation, planetary health, and fragile and conflict-affected states.

In this report we present the evaluation of the EV4GH training programme and network from the perspective of alumni, staff and stakeholders and provide strategic recommendations for the shape and structure of the initiative moving forward. It covers all ten years of the initiative and focuses on the impact on the main beneficiaries of the programme, firstly alumni and secondly, the wider health systems research/practice community. Specific attention is given to fundraising and how EV4GH can remain relevant and innovative, reach the right people, and create a sustainable network structure. This evaluation was delivered by Capacity Development International and dala! Consulting between October 2020 – March 2021.

### Methods

This mixed methods evaluation used a realist, theory-based approach, both formative and summative, with a focus on drawing lessons to inform future strategy and improvements. The formative element was a largely qualitative exploration of success factors and barriers, and the extent to which the pathways of change follow the theory of change (ToC). The summative element included stocktaking and an assessment of the degree to which the programme objectives have been met. A participative approach was used, particularly in the design of the evaluation framework through the co-development of a ToC with beneficiaries, and through a review of

preliminary findings with the steering committee. The evaluators mapped the client's evaluation questions onto the ToC to ensure a logical and coherent framework. All indicators and tools were shared with the steering committee before being finalised.

Most of the primary data collected for this evaluation came from key informant interviews. This was supplemented with additional data from programme documentation and an e-survey. The survey was used to prioritise and assess levels of agreement with key strategic and operational recommendations derived from the primary data. Sampling of interviewees was purposive and pragmatic, in particular based on availability and willingness to participate. Sixty key informant interviews were conducted, of which 44 were with alumni and the remainder represented the EV4GH Secretariat, ITM Antwerp, partner staff and the broader health policy and systems research community. All interviews were conducted remotely, and saturation was sought. Informants came from 37 countries across Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and North America. Observations were also made through attendance of the closing panel of the EV 2020 Virtual Programme and the EV4GH business lunch. The alumni-only e-survey was completed by 59 alumni, a response rate of approximately 21% of total alumni (n=285). A bespoke qualitative analysis tool was used to code and organise the qualitative data from all sources into categories derived from the ToC. Measures of impact were largely based on participants' perceptions of impact - now and in the future. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that all face-to-face engagements were cancelled, this in addition to the increased responsibilities of some alumni due to the pandemic may have limited engagement and participation in this evaluation. The sample may not have been representative of all alumni, in particular inactive alumni were difficult to reach. Another limitation was the small number of key informants from the wider global health systems space or with knowledge of the fundraising activities of EV4GH.

**7 Ventures**  
**285 Alumni**  
**from 66 countries**

Figure 1 Key indicators for EV4GH

## Relevance

EV4GH is well **aligned to beneficiary needs**, with its focus on innovative communication formats, knowledge translation and hot topics; areas typically not covered in academic programmes. The content and timing of the programme was particularly useful for emerging researchers where it enabled them to boost their confidence and skills at a crucial time in their academic careers. There was less agreement on how aligned the programme was for the needs of activists although most participants on the activism track were activist/researchers. The EV4GH programme was widely regarded as a **network and training programme** and is making a valid and needed contribution. Informants identified that there was potential and ambition for the network, but that more needs to be done to enable it to meet that potential particularly in relation to creating an arena for collective action.

## Coherence

The initiative provides **value to the broader global health systems research community** through its diversity of young voices from the global south who have a commitment to social justice and are invested in change. EV4GH is highly valued by partners, stakeholders, and alumni, however, it was also felt that more could be done to maximise its potential niche role. However, with limited resources both financially and in terms of human resource there is a need to focus on a small number of strategic goals. There are equally valid directions that the network could take with a focus on advocacy and thought leadership, broadening reach, facilitating collaboration, or providing more support to existing alumni. Hence a key recommendation is the creation of a strategic plan to help the governance team prioritise over the short, medium, and long term and enable them to reach the full potential of the network. Good relationships have been established with **partner organisations** (co-hosts), who host the face-to-face training, prior to the Health Systems Research Symposium, whilst these do not always sustain in direct ways post-venture many of them continue to encourage applications and support applicant review processes. Post venture partner relationships tend to be dependent on individuals rather than an institutional commitment. Some informants felt that there was space to further develop the roles of these partners post-venture. The **relationship with HSG** brings benefits to both

parties. Participants learn how to engage and navigate international conferences and have the potential to widen their networks and engage with HSG. Many alumni have gone on to have key roles in thematic working groups (TWGs) and the board of HSG. EV4GH brings youth, dynamism, energy, and a focus on equity to the biennial symposia. HSG is currently in a period of strategic review - exploring how to expand its work regionally, and EV4GH is participating in these discussions and initiatives. Some informants felt that EV4GH did not take advantage of further potential synergies between HSG and EV4GH, particularly in relation to strategic thinking and fundraising. Others described that being a TWG reduced the ability of EV4GH to develop, particularly in relation to fundraising. Hence some clarification of roles and key processes such as fundraising would be helpful within EV4GH to allow identification of the opportunities within the boundaries of HSG. EV4GH is well-known within the **Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp (ITM)** and is aligned with its policies. It is well integrated with the International Health Policies (IHP) newsletter, with EV4GH providing editors and articles. There are also synergies between ITM and EV4GH in terms of course participants, PhD supervision, internships, and projects. It provides a good example of the ITM Antwerp goal of 'switching the poles' with leadership being transferred to the mainly global south alumni-led board. Rather than seeking further integration which may be at odds with the decolonisation agenda instead a focus on enabling collaboration between EV4GH and other ITM Antwerp initiatives is recommended. Linked to an overarching strategy, EV4GH would benefit from investing in the strategic development of its partnerships. HSG is a key relationship for EV4GH and a central part of the effectiveness of the training. The strategic review at HSG is a key time for EV4GH to explore how the two can better work together, particularly in relation to diversity and broadening reach. Once a strategic direction has been chosen, EV4GH will be in a stronger position to identify strategic partnerships and negotiate ongoing roles with co-hosts.

## Effectiveness

The initiative was praised for its commitment to and enactment of enabling underrepresented groups to develop their voice within the health systems research and policy space. Participants valued **diversity** and its contribution to peer

learning and an understanding of the importance of context. However, certain groups were still seen as underrepresented both within EV4GH and the wider space; these included some language groups, some geographical regions, indigenous peoples and marginal communities in high income countries, non-privileged groups in low-income countries and candidates from institutions without strong international networks. The balance between activists, policy makers and researchers was an area of ongoing debate and discussion but there was an acknowledgement that EV4GH targets activist/researchers rather than activists per se. It may be that EV4GH has to make a choice about whether to focus on participants with high potential to influence the global discourse or increasing the participation of underrepresented groups who may not have had the same opportunities to build their skills and hence have the same potential. This decision should be part of the strategic review. The evaluators recommend focusing on increasing participation from underrepresented groups who are local to the venture as this will be a cost-efficient approach. Whilst regionalisation was widely recommended by informants as a way to include underrepresented groups, the level of effort required to set up a regional structure should not be underestimated and hence it is recommended this should be done in tandem with HSG rather than setting up parallel structures.

The **training programme** was widely commended. The power of the learning experience of EV4GH comes from selecting and bringing together a diverse group of talented individuals at an early stage of their career who will respond to the catalysing call for social justice, using a range of innovative capacity strengthening techniques, and enabling them to immediately utilise their new skills in an important global conference. The sense of community and trust within the network contributed to a culture of volunteerism and giving back. The face-to-face element was identified as energising, motivating, and fostering strong relationship and network building. Hence, the requirement to go purely online in 2020 due to the pandemic resulted in a lesser experience for this cohort who also identified the difficulty of getting protected time to fully engage with virtual conferences or training. There was also feedback that the online training platform was dated and difficult to navigate. Training content relating to

communications tools, methods and approaches were highly valued. In addition, the hot topic debates were new formats to most of the informants and were also highly valued. If EV4GH wants to keep a reputation for 'cutting edge' communication techniques, then more attention to this would be needed in the fallow years between ventures and in selection of strategic partners. It is, however, entirely valid to focus on effective rather than innovative communication.

Alumni universally expressed the value and continued utility of the communication components of the training. Informants talked about increased confidence to **communicate and present** in a wide range of formats. Opportunities to write blogs, opinion pieces, or articles for the IHP newsletter and BMJ Global Health were highly valued and more of these type of strategic partnerships would benefit the network and reduce dependency on a small number of individuals. Whilst EV4GH had previously undertaken formal mentoring in relation to academic or other outputs this had proved difficult to maintain due to the intense time and resource commitment needed and other opportunities offering this service. It is not recommended to return to this approach. There was evidence of alumni collaborating on writing either blogs based on events they attended or think pieces on topics of mutual interest. At the present time, however, these outputs occur organically between alumni rather than as part of a coordinated EV4GH collective voice.

There was significant agreement that the **network** had unmet potential but less agreement on how to best move the network forward with options to promote virtual learning events, alumni database, collaborative and joint advocacy work. Alumni greatly valued the Google Group emails allowing them to keep up to date in the field and identify opportunities. It is largely consumed passively and a few found the volume difficult to manage. WhatsApp groups seemed to be the backbone of active communication between alumni, largely organised at a cohort level where strong bonds between participants facilitated sustained interaction. Whilst alumni recognised the potential of a regional approach to broaden reach and catalyse more action, to date there has been limited success in creating active regional networks and the evaluators feel that a cohort approach is a

more natural organising principle than large regions where barriers between members are often significant (geographic, language, unfamiliarity). The twitter handle was praised by alumni as highlighting and amplifying alumni achievements but the newsletter, Facebook page, LinkedIn presence and website would all benefit from a review in relation to their utility to the needs of alumni and/or external audiences. If channels are little used, then they should not receive significant time investment. Survey respondents (n=59) identified space for facilitating/seeking collaboration, noticeboard for current opportunities and the ability to contact other alumni based on interests/geography as the top three additional functionalities they would like to see from EV4GH networking platforms. The evaluators recommend that EV4GH focus on how to catalyse the unmet potential within the alumni network. The network could seek to draw together alumni and coalesce around core themes identified by the network. Ideally this should combine some ongoing themes for instance decolonisation with a biennial theme chosen by each new cohort, ensuring that the issues selected are important to emerging rather than emerged researchers. Quarterly virtual meetings could contain content and debate around the issue, as well as giving an opportunity for the new cohort to introduce themselves to the wider group. Emerged alumni could also be given spots to share career hacks and experiences with younger members. Hence these virtual meetings would enable more inter-cohort exchange but have a clear theme to organise around. There is also an opportunity for EV4GH to be at the forefront of innovation in thinking about how to facilitate participation and discussion in online spaces.

There are high levels of **volunteerism** in the network with alumni taking the lead in designing and facilitating ventures and in leading the initiative through the board and taskforces. The dedication and commitment particularly of the board members is commendable and highly appreciated by stakeholders and alumni. However, there were concerns about over reliance on a few individuals and the risk of burnout. For those alumni who were less active, this was due to personal and professional commitments rather than disillusionment with the programme. The alumni network is diverse and, largely alumni-driven and **southern-led**. There are opportunities

to broaden the volunteer pool through smaller but meaningful opportunities to volunteer, having a separate channel to communicate volunteering opportunities (and internal network news) to avoid it being 'lost' in the Google Group and incentivising volunteering.

Peer-to-peer and expert **mentoring** and support was considered extremely important and useful within the alumni network, however, quality and quantity of mentoring varied both within and between ventures. This was particularly highlighted as an issue for the online elements of the programme where some participants did not receive feedback on their submissions. The training programme at the HSR Symposia benefits from the close bonds made between the participants and the facilitators. EV4GH should decide on the optimal number for this training to ensure it does not become diluted nor go beyond the capacity of volunteers.

The mix of capacity strengthening techniques used by EV4GH during the venture are perceived by the alumni to, in some cases, have had a profound effect on their attitudes and, in all cases, to have **built skills** that will aid them through their subsequent careers. Informants valued critical thinking skills obtained through the various formats of debates. An enhanced commitment to tackling equity was identified by alumni as a product of the training. The focus on soft skills that are often not developed well within academic programmes was highly valued and aligns with best practices in strengthening the capacity of researchers.

Alumni report being provided with significant opportunity as a result of participation in the programme, including **increased visibility**, increased **international networks** and access to decision-makers and other influencers. International collaborations have been identified as being particularly important for researchers from the global south and there were examples of alumni having leveraged these networks to further their professional careers and publishing opportunities. Increased visibility was through opportunities at HSRS, publishing platforms and amplification by alumni and the network. As with all opportunities the degree to which alumni made use of them was largely a personal decision

motivated by their particular aspirations and constraints.

### Efficiency

Current programme **funding** allows the training to be delivered biennially but does not allow EV4GH to widen its scope or offer through for instance broadening reach, increasing participant numbers, advocacy, and activities between ventures. It will require different and more strategic resourcing as the needs of alumni grow or if a more ambitious set of impacts are envisaged. The **governance board** should be commended for their commitment to delivering high quality ventures on a voluntary basis. The board works well with the secretariat. There is a need to better separate out strategic governance from operational functions so that the board are able to give sufficient attention to their strategic roles which are currently underdeveloped. Currently, governance is driven by the venture rather than driving the programme and the network. There are a number of strategic options for EV4GH but limited resources means that prioritisation is crucial to maximise potential. Alumni value the transparency of the governance election procedures and felt that EV4GH is largely alumni- and southern-led. Whilst regional representation is valued by alumni, regional activity is minimal. With recent elections, some governance members are new to the board and additional support, through training or mentoring, would be beneficial. **Taskforces** need to have stronger terms of reference and clearer sets of deliverables and accountabilities, including timeframes and concrete outputs. Increasing the number of volunteers on taskforces and enabling them to take on more operational roles from the board would free up the board to be more strategic. The **secretariat** function is fulfilled very well but is dependent on the good will of staff to provide additional unpaid inputs, particularly at the time of a venture. The secretariat needs to relocate from its current institutional home. Depending on the strategic decisions made as to the future of EV4GH, consideration needs to be given to increasing the number and focus of professional roles within the secretariat. Useful skills within the secretariat include strategic partnerships development, fundraising and communications. **Partner** institutions were invaluable in their contribution to co-hosting the face-to-face training and pre-symposium providing venues, expertise and logistical support. They also

enabled connection to a broader set of actors in the regions in which they operate, and continued to 'feed' the programme by recommending it to staff and peers. ITM Antwerp fulfils a key role within the initiative providing curation of the Google Group, access to the IHP platform, intern opportunities, staff to facilitate or provide expert inputs into the venture, management of funding and advice to the Board. The 'hands off' but supportive role of ITM Antwerp was widely praised by the alumni. The initiative would benefit from choosing several indicators to support better **monitoring, evaluation and learning** in particular being able to track numbers of applications, diversity of participants and scholarship funds between ventures. Other indicators should reflect the strategic priorities decided in the review process.

### Impact

It is clear that EV4GH has a significant impact on its alumni beyond what might be expected from a short-term capacity strengthening input. Alumni describe increased **professional effectiveness** because of the communications training, development of critical thinking and the Google Group emails, which keep them at the cutting edge of thinking and the field. Participation also increased participants **motivation and confidence** to engage and be critical in global health debates. Alumni reported feeling empowered to engage with policy and decision makers at local, regional, national, and global levels. Participation in the venture also led to increased **opportunities** some directly for instance through collaborations between alumni, internships at ITM Antwerp and through opportunities circulated in the Google Group emails. Other opportunities were indirect such as broadening horizons of the type and scope of career pathways available and the confidence to attain them. Uneven access to opportunities, especially internationally, is often cited as a barrier to participation of LMIC academics in the global research market, hence EV4GH's contribution to making this a more level playing field is an important one. Alumni are moving into positions of **influence** in academia, NGOs, INGOs and government. They are working at global, regional, national, and subnational levels. They are exerting influence through innovations in research, contextual research with a social-justice focus, developing policy, policy briefs, advocacy, building networks, influencing new early career

researchers, and providing technical advice. Alumni felt that participation in EV4GH increased their personal visibility within the HPSR space and through publishing platforms and social media. There was widespread agreement that EV4GH had been successful in bringing a more youthful **voice** into HSRS which was predominantly from the global south and gender balanced. Through this EV4GH has been successful in influencing the global health discourse, in a “constructively disruptive” manner within HSRS. In the wider public domain, some alumni are at the forefront of the **global health debates** on decolonisation, and others are prominent in conversations around planetary health. But as yet EV4GH has not achieved a collective voice. There were both personal and structural barriers identified as to why this had not happened. The recommendations already made in choosing one or two core themes and one biannual theme for collective discussion, research and advocacy could facilitate the development of a collective voice helping unleash some of the potential of the network. As the alumni mature into their careers and take on more ‘powerful’ roles in the space, so too has their ability to influence the global health discourse grown. The sense of community, a shared motivation to address inequality, and the positive brand of EV4GH within the health systems research community is all capital that is currently not being utilised to its full potential due to resource constraints. Focusing some effort on increasing opportunities for collaborative work in this context could create powerful synergies within EV4GH for collective action and voice for social justice.

### **Sustainability**

It is clear that EV4GH participants gain skills that are used **throughout their careers**, but also that the experience has a profound effect on some alumni. This is through a change in the attitudes characterised by a social justice perspective, a respect for difference, and a commitment to think critically and engage constructively. These are skills and attitudes central to an ability to lead transformative change - and hence are central to improving global health. It is notoriously difficult to create changes in attitude through short-term training interventions, and so this is a commendable achievement. The boost to self-confidence which occurs at the venture and is then consistently amplified through engagement in the

network is also vital in enabling underrepresented groups to take on more prominence in the field. The network also continues to boost participants’ knowledge through the Google Group. Kristof Decoster’s role in providing valuable content to the Google Group was seen as central to maintaining group coherence and for its ongoing impact. Concerns were raised about sustainability and whether succession planning should be in place to protect this vital role. Increased and diversification of **funding** are important for long term sustainability but investment is needed for EV4GH to be in a position to pursue these goals. There is a strategic and skills deficit that needs to be addressed before being able to strongly pursue additional funding. This could be through leveraging expertise from partners or seeking funding to support an expanded secretariat including fundraising skills. Whilst EV4GH is potentially an attractive proposition to funders there is a need to clearly define the purpose and focus of EV4GH to support fundraising, and to clarify the type of funds which are acceptable for different activities and to develop more detailed costings of different aspects of the initiative. It would also be useful to estimate the considerable in-kind costs which are provided by ITM Antwerp, the Institute of Public Health (IPH) Bangalore and co-hosts which can be used to demonstrate value for money. A further area of consideration is how to resource collective advocacy and influencing work, given donor potential to influence programming. While some funders would be interested in this kind of work, there may be instances where the initiative will need to consider self-funding because the network challenges prevailing norms and generally accepted practice, or when the ideological position of the network makes collaborations difficult. In addition, it is recommended that smooth transfer of the secretariat function is a priority operationally, as this presents significant risk to the continuity of the initiative. While creating a **critical mass** in health policy and systems research at an institutional level was perceived to be a good idea, especially in certain regions where this area is relatively neglected, there was also some ambivalence as to its implications in practice. There was a sense that critical mass was important, but that it was not EV4GH’s role to focus on institutional strengthening, however, there may be scope to explore this in the longer term in relation to the regionalisation agenda.

## Conclusions

EV4GH is an exceptional capacity strengthening programme, which purposively selects participants mostly from the global south who have a commitment to social justice and the potential to have influence and impact in the field of health systems and policy. It is a unique training experience in the health policy and systems field, with its focus on communication skills, current debates, equity and its link to a prestigious global conference where participants can immediately put the skills they have learned to use. Alumni have both loud voices in the sector and quiet influence. They are working in roles with leadership potential or are already exerting leadership in national, regional and international roles. EV4GH has had a lasting impact on the HSG conference and EV4GH alumni are at the forefront of some of the challenging discourse in terms of gender, decolonisation and planetary health. However, more collaborative/collective action may be needed in changing the discourse and being constructively disruptive at a global level. There are many options and potentials that the network could meet but, with limited resources, it is important to focus. There is also a clear appetite for more collective and collaborative action and potential to do more between the training ventures. With the transfer of the secretariat in 2021, there is an opportunity to review the staffing needs and fundraising capacity. EV4GH is an impressive initiative but it is time for the next step in order to both underpin sustainability and unleash its transformative potential. We consider the following strategic recommendations to be important, more detailed strategic and operational recommendations and sub-recommendations can be found throughout the report and are also presented as one combined list under the strategic recommendations in Annex 8.

## Strategic Recommendations

1. Commission the facilitated development of a ten-year strategic plan, detailed financial model and associated fundraising strategy
2. Strengthen initiative monitoring and evaluation
3. Develop a partnership strategy that differentiates the types of partners and highlights their added value
4. Restructure the board, secretariat and taskforces to create more delineation between operational and strategic roles
5. Expand the volunteer base and consider a limited incentives and awards scheme within available resources
6. Make strategic decisions about criteria for EV4GH recruitment in relation to diversities
7. Choose one or two core focal areas and one biennial topic to harness a collective EV4GH voice
8. Recognise that influence through activism and advocacy is understood in different ways and encourage EVs to use these different models to have an impact
9. Launch a quarterly webinar series to promote cross-cohort interaction, career advice, skills sharing and collaborative action
10. Focus on innovation in online and face to face learning communities, both for the venture and the network
11. Engage with HSG to better understand how HSG and EV4GH can complement their evolving strategic thinking including regionalisation

## INTRODUCTION

Within the global health policy and systems research (HPSR) community, there is a strong emphasis on delivering high-quality research that addresses high health burden conditions whilst strengthening health systems in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). However, for the research to be useful and implementation-ready, it needs to have the potential to influence policy and practice. Globally, there is widespread evidence of failure to implement cost-effective health interventions based on high-quality research<sup>1</sup>. LMICs face additional challenges using research evidence, including weak health systems, professional, personal, political, and institutional barriers and access to timely, relevant, and useful evidence that speaks to policymakers<sup>23</sup>. What is required is a level playing field where researchers and research institutions have the capacity, research infrastructure, and support systems to produce international standard research that meets the needs of their own populations and policymakers.

Early career researchers (ECRs) and public health advocates/activists in LMICs are tomorrow's global health leaders and require support to develop the full range of knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and advocates, as articulated in the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (vitae.ac.uk). Beyond a narrow focus of technical/scientific knowledge, this includes domains that focus on personal effectiveness, research governance, management and engagement, influence, and impact. Early career researchers (ECR) and advocates also need opportunities to apply their new knowledge and skills, as well as international exposure. The Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) initiative is a blended training programme and network linked to the global HSR Symposia and Health Systems Global (HSG) that targets young, promising, and emerging health policy and systems researchers, researcher activists, decision makers and other health professionals with an interest in becoming global health voices and/or local change makers, particularly in LMICs. Thus, EV4GH has always been about giving voice, particularly to underrepresented groups to enable them to shift discourses and paradigms using evidence. An equity focus has been embedded within the biennial programme, including through application of gender and power lenses, and a more recent focus on decolonisation, planetary health and on fragile and conflict affected states.

Capacity Development International (CDI) and dala! Consulting Services were contracted to deliver the evaluation of the EV4GH initiative and delivered it between October 2020 to March 2021.

## PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The objective is to evaluate the EV4GH initiative from the perspective of alumni, staff and stakeholders and to provide strategic recommendations for the shape and structure of the initiative moving forward. The evaluation is not mandatory and is thus less focused on accountability and more on learning to make decisions to shape the future of the programme. It covers all ten years of the initiative (with some emphasis on the past five years) and focuses on the impact on the main beneficiaries of the programme, firstly alumni and secondly the wider health systems research/practice community. Specific attention is given to fundraising and how EV4GH can remain relevant and innovative, reach the right people, and create a sustainable network structure.

## SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION INCLUDING THE EVALUATION OBJECT AND BENEFICIARIES

The object of the evaluation is the EV4GH blended training programme and network. The programme has run in 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018 and is ongoing for 2020/21. The venture has evolved and grown and

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<sup>1</sup> Haines A, Kuruville S, Borchert M. Bridging the implementation gap between knowledge and action for health. *Bull World Health Organ*. 2004 Oct;82(10):724-31; discussion 732. PMID: 15643791; PMCID: PMC2623035.

<sup>2</sup> Orton L, Lloyd-Williams F, Taylor-Robinson D, O'Flaherty M, Capewell S. The use of research evidence in public health decision making processes: systematic review. *PLoS One*. 2011;6(7):e21704.

<sup>3</sup> Middleton J. Research into practice: why is it so difficult to get a GRIP? A discussion paper. *The Lancet*. 2013. Volume 382, S19

has become a network of emerging voices. The evaluation object is the EV4GH initiative which includes both the programme and network components of EV4GH. The direct beneficiaries of the EV4GH initiative are:

- New EV4GH participants
- Alumni
- The wider health systems research/practice community

## METHODOLOGY

A realist, theory-based approach was used in the evaluation, both formative and summative, with a focus on drawing lessons to inform future strategy and improvements.

The formative element is a largely qualitative exploration of success factors and barriers, and the extent to which the pathways of change follow the theory of change (ToC), using indicators derived from the ToC itself. In-depth interviews were used to understand the barriers and enablers to participation during and post the training element of the EV4GH initiative. The summative element includes stocktaking and an assessment of the degree to which the programme objectives have been met (refer to Annex 2 for documents reviewed). These include the varied impacts that participation has produced.

Both elements of the evaluation draw on the initiative's ToC, which was derived using participative methods in the inception phase. The evaluators mapped the evaluation questions in the original evaluation ToR (Annex 7) onto the ToC to ensure a logical and coherent framework that is not overly complex. The framework was organised according to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and includes the outcomes and impacts identified in the design and ToC, but also allows additional benefits and unintended consequences to be identified. Hence, the evaluation is goals-based, but also includes an "unbounded exploration" of change. The evaluation framework was utilised to design the semi-structured question guides used within the evaluation. All indicators and tools were shared with the steering committee before being finalised.

We used a participative approach, particularly in the design of the evaluation framework through the co-development of a ToC with beneficiaries and in reviewing preliminary findings with the steering committee.

This is a mixed methods evaluation, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to triangulate data and to strengthen the robustness of the evaluation design. The majority of the primary data collected for this evaluation came from key informant interviews. Additional data from programme documentation was added to the data analysis where it added value or was contrary to interview data. Survey data was used to prioritise and assess levels of agreement with key strategic and operational recommendations derived from the primary data.

Sampling of interviewees was purposive and pragmatic, in particular based on availability and willingness to participate. Initially all alumni were informed by the Secretariat about the evaluation and were asked to provide consent to be contacted by the evaluators. Interviews were conducted between 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 until 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. All informants who agreed to be contacted by the evaluators were followed up at least three times by the evaluation team. Additional calls to alumni were also made via twitter, the Secretariat, the Google Group, and by individual board members. The number of key informant interviews conducted was 60 of which 44 were with alumni, and the remainder represented the EV4GH Secretariat, ITM Antwerp, partner staff and the broader HSG community. All interviews were conducted remotely.

The breakdown of key informants by interview type is given in Table 1. Informants came from 37 countries across Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and North America. Observations were also made through attendance of the closing panel of the EV 2020 Virtual Programme on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and the EV4GH business lunch on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. A short e-survey for alumni only was circulated and completed by a total of 59 alumni, a response rate of approximately 21% of the total alumni (n=285). Assuming

around 50% of the network are classified as active for the initiative, then approximately 41% of this more active group responded. Whilst there was crossover between the survey and key informants the list of respondents was different. Table 2 shows the breakdown of survey respondents and interviewees by cohort. Thirty-six new voices were obtained through the survey and twenty-three alumni were both interviewed and completed the e-survey.

**Table 1 Breakdown of remote interviews by interviewee type**

Interviewee Type	Number
Alumni – 2020	2
Alumni – Less Active	11
Alumni – Active	18
Alumni – Initially Active	7
Governing Board – Alumni	6
Secretariat	3
ITM Antwerp and Initiative Initiators	5
Partner Staff (non alumni)	4
Broader HSG Community	3
Unsuccessful Applicant	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

**Table 2 Breakdown of remote interviews of alumni and survey respondents by cohort**

Cohort	Alumni Interviewees	Alumni Survey Respondents
2010	6	3
2012	7	9
2013	1	6
2014	13	12
2016	10	8
2018	5	7
2020	2	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>59</b>

A bespoke qualitative analysis tool developed in Microsoft Access was used to code and organise the qualitative data from all sources (interviews, documents, observations) and then this data was triangulated with that of the e-survey. A total of 1,501 qualitative data points were collected organised into 75 themes and 66 sub-themes.

## Limitations

1. As expected, it proved difficult to contact less active alumni, although the evaluators did speak to a small number who identified as being in that category. It was also difficult to categorise alumni as either less active, initially active or active as their level of activity varied over time and in terms of their engagement with different elements of the network and venture.
2. Whilst considerable effort was made to contact high level stakeholders through emails, few high-level stakeholders within the health systems research community were available for interview to gain a wider perspective on the impact of the initiative. However, it should also be noted that some high level stakeholders were either classified as partners/co-hosts or are in fact EV alumni.
3. Measurement of project impact is difficult due to the challenges of attribution. Hence, impact was largely based on participants' perceptions of impact now and in the future.
4. Whilst robust, adapted research methodologies were used, the time available necessitated quicker and less formal techniques for analysis and synthesis than would be used in a research study. We have used these techniques in several evaluations and find that they provide extremely useful and robust

information for learning and validation.

5. The impact of the COVID-19 response is yet to be fully understood but has had several impacts on the delivery of this evaluation and curtailed all face-to-face engagements. The use of digital platform for workshops is still a developing practice for many and, while the ToC workshop was conducted successfully, limitations are evident in the difficulties experienced in getting participant feedback on the workshop outputs.

## Ethics

Initially all alumni were informed by the EV4GH Secretariat about the evaluation and were asked to provide consent to be contacted by the evaluators. The evaluators only contacted those Alumni who had given consent to share their contact details. An informed consent form and information sheet was emailed prior to interview which included information on privacy and who to contact with any complaints. Participants were asked to give their explicit consent before starting the interview. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from participation at any given point. Questions in the key informant interviews and the survey were designed so as not to probe into sensitive areas and to be objective. All data collected was kept confidential and quotations have been carefully used to ensure confidentiality. Data protections included consent to storage and use, password protected data, permissions, secure storage, deletion. Data will be stored for a period dictated by the GDPR provisions. The evaluation conformed to the principles of 'Do no harm' and carefully considered the implications of the approach and processes on the wellbeing and safety of respondents.

## Report Structure

In the first section of the report, the scope, context and evaluation object, objectives and questions are described and in the second section the evaluation methodology is briefly outlined. In the third section the findings and discussion are structured around the adapted OECD/DAC criteria for evaluation of development programmes, and the ToC and accompanying assumptions. For each indicator the results are reported immediately followed by discussion, identification of good practice and recommendations. When referring to elements of the ToC the reference number of individual elements is given in square brackets eg [P01].

A set of additional outputs are also included in the report

1. External facing case study on communicating better (Output1, Communicating Better Case study) page 39
2. Internal facing think piece on the relationship between visibility and influence (Output 2, A Spectrum of Activism Think Piece) page 62
3. Suggestions for a monitoring and evaluation framework for the initiative (Output 3) page 100

## FINDINGS

This part of the report broadly follows the OECD/DAC criteria for programme evaluation: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. Within each of these sections, findings are discussed in alignment with the theory of change with references to the ToC elements given in square brackets. Each findings section has a final discussion section which references the evaluation questions posed in the terms of reference for this consultancy. Recommendations are made at the end of each of the major sections. The findings section starts with a brief summary of the EV4GH programme and structures.

## Background information on EV4GH

In 2010, the first Global Symposium on Health Systems Research took place in Montreux Switzerland. In the same year ITM Antwerp organised their annual scientific colloquium in Antwerp and, tired of the “established” public health elite, they disrupted the “business as usual” approach by getting young people to do the talking, whilst the “established” people listened and joined the debate. Fifty young practitioners and researchers from around the globe were selected and trained in Antwerp in Pecha Kucha, networking and fishbowl discussions, and introduced to the big themes of the global symposium. These Emerging Voices (EVs) made a splash at the Montreux Health Systems Research Symposium (HSRS) and EV4GH was born and has run biennially ever since aligned with the Biennial Global Symposium on Health Systems Research. In 2012 EV4GH was hosted by Peking University. This was preceded by a two-month virtual training programme in which participants were expected to commit 2-3 hours per week for learning. This was followed by two weeks of face-to-face training immediately before the HSR Symposium. The training programme consisted of three elements: innovative communication formats, knowledge translation and thematic modules which evolved and aligned with the symposium. EVs from 2010 along with ITM Antwerp staff and co-hosts, mentored the 2012 cohort. Language support was provided to the 2010 and 2012 cohort.

The University of Western Cape, Cape Town, in South Africa hosted the next ventures in 2013 to coincide with the ICASA AIDS conference and 2014 aligned with the third HSR Symposium. In 2014 it became clear that this was more than just a blended training programme to support EVs in HPSR but also a network of emerging voices made up of young researchers and activists with an interest in becoming influential global health voices and with a passion for making change in the health policy and systems arena. At the 2014 Cape Town venture, EV4GH made the decision to become more structurally integrated into Health Systems Global (HSG) and became the HSG young researchers thematic working group (TWG). Also in 2014, distance coaching was initiated before the face-to-face training took place. Between 2012-14 participants were paired with mentors after the symposium to help in scientific writing. The mentorship component reduced in significance after 2014 and moved to a more informal basis and, after 2014 there was a shift in writing support to blogging.

In 2015 the EV4GH TWG was initiated, initially focused on the venture and webinars. Key activities of the TWG have included organising EV4GH events at global health conferences; hosting webinars; arranging young researcher workshops; facilitating networking between different EV cohorts & regions; and Google Group thematic discussions. In 2015, a new globally representative governance structure as well as a new secretariat was appointed for the emerging voices initiative, with the secretariat situated at Institute of Public Health (IPH), Bangalore, India. In 2016, the pre-conference took place in Vancouver without a formal co-host, but was supported by the Canadian Society for International Health and Secretariats of both HSG and EV4GH. In 2018 the venture took place in Liverpool co-hosted by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and in 2020 in Dubai with co-host of the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a fully virtual programme. Over the years the training programme has evolved dynamically. The EV governance body, secretariat and alumni have led the updating of the curriculum, content of learning materials and learning methodology. This has resulted in changes in selection criteria, size of cohort, duration of both the online and face to face components, mentoring support and shifts in the focus of writing support and big themes.

The relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and programme impact and sustainability are described in detail in the subsequent sections.

## Relevance

### Alignment of inputs and activities with the ToC and purpose of the initiative

This section briefly addresses the alignment of inputs and activities with the ToC and the purpose of the initiative. The purpose statement and theory of change were both designed as part of the evaluation process in a participatory process involving EV alumni, secretariat, board members and ITM Antwerp. The purpose statement is:

*EV4GH catalyses and empowers voices of emerging health systems research leaders, activists and other change makers with the capabilities to challenge and address current and future health systems and policy issues at all levels with an equity lens. We connect diverse voices through: an innovative, nurturing programme of blended learning and peer support; exposure to the global health systems community; providing the space for collaboration and continued contribution to the EV4GH alumni-led network.*

Survey respondents (n=59) were specifically asked to rate the degree to which the purpose statement captures EV4GH and comment on what they liked and did not like within the statement. Overall, there was good support for the purpose statement with an overall average score of 8.64 using a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 represents that the purpose does not reflect EV4GH at all and 10 that it completely reflects EV4GH (see Figure 1). Specific feedback on the purpose statement is provided in Annex 6.

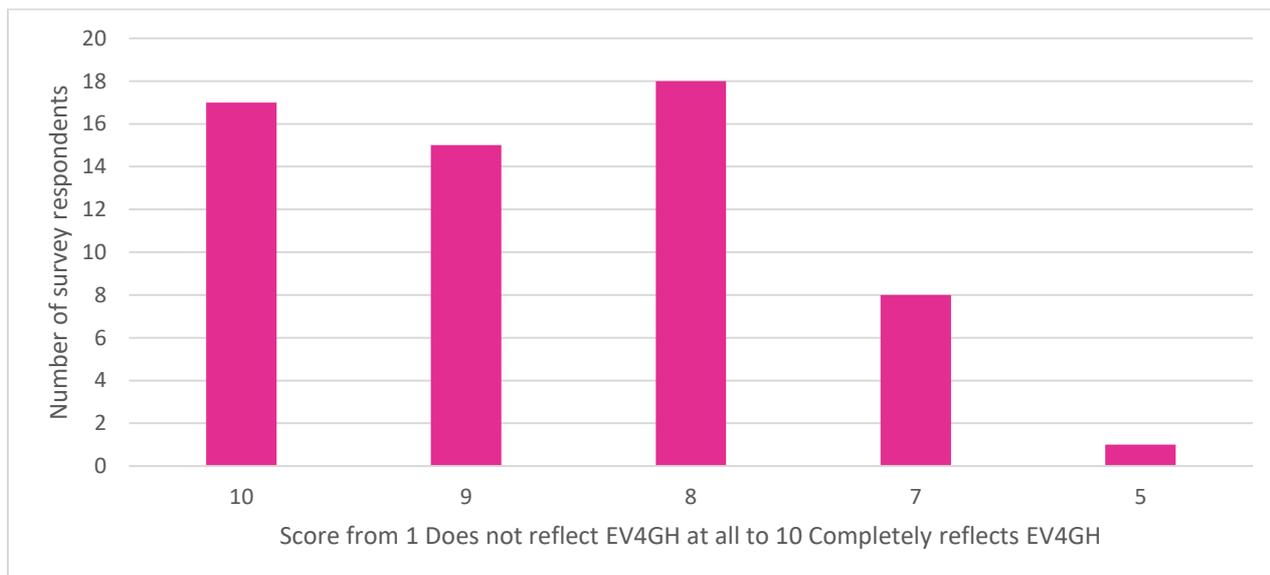


Figure 2 Frequency table of survey respondents score of the degree to which the purpose statement reflects EV4GH (n=59)

Very minor modifications were made to the theory of change and assumptions (Annex 3) during the evaluation and as such represented a good framework for understanding the relationship between the activities of EV4GH and the changes that happen as a result. Small changes that were made to the assumptions are highlighted in red in Annex 3. The only change made to the ToC was to add formal and informal engagement to [T5] which was about engagement with the network. In addition, a simplified representation of the ToC was requested and is provided in Annex 4.

It is not the role of the evaluators to rewrite the initiative's purpose statement but there is some valuable feedback from alumni that the Board should digest and reflect on. It is recommended that a full review of the purpose statement and ToC should form part of a strategic review (discussed in this report) at which point the comments contained in Annex 6 should also be considered. Thus, for this evaluation, the purpose statement and the ToC provided a useful framework to analyse both the actual and potential outcomes of the initiative's activities.

### Recommendations

1. Review the purpose statement, feedback from survey respondents, and the ToC as part of a strategic review process

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### Perception of how aligned EV4GH is with the needs of its beneficiaries

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This section explores perceptions of how aligned EV4GH is with the **needs of its beneficiaries both as a training programme and also as a network [A15]**. It also explores the degree to which **EV4GH needs to be a network and a training programme [A45]**.

Scholarships for participants from the global south were highly valued and sought after by both emerging researchers and activists. The high demand for a place (431 applicants for 30 places in 2020), also suggests that the programme is meeting a need for both young researchers and activists.

Overall, beneficiaries felt that the skills they built were relevant to their needs and filled a gap in provision within their training. They valued the communications component, typically not covered in academic programmes such as writing to non-academic audiences, using social media and innovative presentation methods. Alumni who had been part way through their PhD training when they attended the venture highlighted that the timing of the training was extremely useful to them.

*I think it was really strategic the identification of the skills that budding researchers need [Alumni 2014]*

*It is a set of skills you do not get from anywhere else [Alumni 2016]*

Whilst emerging researchers entering the field of HPSR thought that the training content was well aligned to their needs, activists without a strong research focus felt there was less alignment, and that content was over oriented towards communications.

*So many voices and backgrounds, you cannot have a one size fits all in this type of thing [Alumni 2016]*

Exposure to critical thinking, health systems debate using an equity lens and hot topics helped build participants confidence and skills. Some alumni reported how peer support and mentoring inputs had impacted on decisions along their career paths. This was recognised as fulfilling a need that is often not provided in such programmes. There was unanimous agreement that the opportunity to immediately apply new learning and skills in the health systems research symposium (HSRS) as well as the increased networking opportunities afforded by HSRS was an invaluable experience.

Internal evaluations conducted at the end of each venture suggest that the training component met participant needs. Content for each new venture is designed and updated by volunteer alumni from the previous cohort to address any shortcomings or gaps from the former edition. Currently there is no formal engagement with newly selected EVs to identify their priorities, needs, and skills gaps prior to starting the programme. Some alumni suggested conducting a training needs assessment prior to participating in the

programme due to the diverse experience, skill sets and backgrounds of each cohort. Another suggestion was to design more separate strands to meet the different needs of both researcher and less research-oriented activists.

Alumni highly valued the network and described it as having equal or more importance than the training component. Partner and ITM Antwerp staff acknowledged that in the early years the focus was always on the venture, but that with growing numbers of alumni, optimising the network to meet its full potential was becoming increasingly important.

*EV is not a qualification and that is important because there are other benefits... Networking is incredibly important ...generating the confidence and willingness to engage is very important. [Partner staff]*

For LMIC researchers based in the global south and for those working in a less academically supportive or isolated environments, the network filled a gap, giving them the potential to connect with like-minded people and the wider HPSR community. Alumni described being part of a family and of a global lifelong learning network. For those who personally invested in the network, they described opportunities to connect with more experienced and diverse researchers in global health as well as having a better understanding of different contexts. There was unanimity on the benefits for young researchers and activist to engage in the HSRS platform which provided the opportunity for EV voices to be heard within the wider health system community. Wider stakeholders from the HPSR community described the value the network brings to the broader global health systems research community in terms of diversity of voices, young voices, future leaders, and motivated individuals invested in change.

Informants also identified unmet potential of the network including:

- Providing content and networking opportunities between HSR Symposia
- Working with alumni for advocacy within global health
- Leveraging the network to produce collaborative work

*There is a huge opportunity to create a network of advocates... a skillset [that is] absent from academic training but increasingly required for us as health systems experts. We have to challenge the political status quo, raise the unheard voices... it takes more than being smart, you have to understand how to do that and how to do that well.... [there is] unrealised potential in our programme to do that. [Alumni 2013]*

With its energy and young critical voices who speak truth to power, early alumni argued that EV4GH is ideally placed to play a key role as being a conscience keeper and thought leader within the HPSR community.

*Emerging voices is one of the heart beats of health policy and systems research. We need critical thinkers, grounded in local communities and contexts, to speak truth to power... [Stakeholder]*

Others identified the potential for creating a network of advocates, which would entail building on the advocacy component of the programme, often absent from academic training but necessary for HPSR. Should the governance board decide to further develop the activism and advocacy component, this would also help distinguish EV4GH from the plethora of other global health leadership programmes.

*We should aim to be a body that has constantly flowing diversity of voices in the global health discourse... Not a training ground for global health leadership. [Alumni 2010]*

One of the early alumni and facilitators reflected that as the programme has evolved, so the intake has become more established and connected; thus questioning the need for training, although acknowledging that the

immersive learning is what underpins the network. More recent alumni still identified the training as fulfilling unmet need.

*I have not been convinced that the training is necessary, but you need something to hang the network on, so for that reason it is necessary [Alumni 2010]*

There was a sense from key informants, that with many of the early EVs now more established, that now was the right time to refresh the purpose of EV4GH and to strategically build on its reputation and social capital already created.

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## Discussion

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### **How can the format be adapted to better fit the needs of participants to give them voice within the global health system?**

The EV4GH programme is widely regarded as a powerful initiative that is making a valid and needed contribution. The underlying principle of unleashing the voice of emerging researchers and activists to boost their confidence and skills remains highly relevant and meets an important need at a crucial time in their emerging careers; this is supported through training and the HSRS platform.

Numerous suggestions were made by alumni and facilitators regarding adaptation of the curriculum to be more responsive and flexible to the needs of each diverse intake. This included engaging in advance with newly selected participants to ensure their voice feeds into design/content of their own learning programme and also designing more separate strands to meet the different needs of both researcher and activists. Tools like the Vitae Researcher Development Framework can be useful in conducting needs assessments. Whilst advance engagement on the learning content is good practice and also manages participant expectations, this may not be an immediate priority for EV4GH as the development of bespoke training could be a considerable drain on already over stretched resources.

### **To what extent does EV4GH also need to be a network?**

There is much potential and ambition for the network. Stakeholders and alumni saw it as an important platform through which emerging voices can be heard and valued the continuous learning provided through the network. However, it was clear that many informants felt that potential of the network was largely unmet in creating an arena for collective action that in turn could have a meaningful impact on discourse in the HPSR space. These ideas are discussed in later sections of the report.

### **Recommendations**

1. In the medium to long-term consider engaging with newly selected participants to ensure their voice feeds into the design and content of the learning programme

## Coherence

This section looks at the coherence of the initiative within the field and with its key partners.

Perception of the niche of EV4GH with the global health systems research and/or activist communities

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This section relates to informants' perceptions that **EV4GH has a niche within the global health research and activist community [A43]**.

There was widespread agreement that EV4GH was a positive initiative within the global health systems research field. Aspects of the initiative that informants identified as being unique or setting it apart from other initiatives included its focus on health policy and systems research rather than the wider global health field, the focus on LMIC participants, giving voice to young researchers and the staying power of the network.

When asked about similar initiatives informants identified a range of fellowships, capacity development opportunities and panels focussed on youth voices. Whilst many of these were centred on researchers, some were also focussed on activists e.g. The Atlantic Fellows for Health Equity in South Africa (AFHESA) or policy makers e.g. Joint Learning Network or the University of Washington training of young cadre within Ministries of Health or Action AID's platform for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to interact with policy makers. However, none were focussed on the global health policy and systems research space, connected to a platform with the reach of HSRS within that space or had a network that sustained.

Alongside the capacity strengthening provided by EV4GH, informants identified that there were key areas of impact or potential impact of the network. These included more effective individuals with potential to make an impact, a global voice within the health policy and systems space, thought leadership and advocacy, and creating opportunities and/or collaborations for alumni.

Having a network of people with the potential to make an impact in the field was identified as a key aspect of the network but with the potential to do more to support alumni. Informants who saw this aspect as important recommended a more deliberate approach to seeking opportunities to actively influence policy and to provide more support to alumni in developing their skills in this area. They also identified the importance of selecting a small cadre of individuals with potential and supporting them, rather than risk broadening reach but diluting support. For some informants, however, this approach was seen as a form of elitism that they felt was ethically questionable. Other perspectives were that it was more important that EV4GH focuses on reaching the researchers that do not benefit from other opportunities for example to give preference to participants based in LMIC institutions as opposed to the current mix which included LMIC participants based in HIC institutions. These aspects are discussed in more detail in relation to the diversity of the cohorts.

*I was thinking about what makes EV4GH special and I was thinking that it is not necessarily the amount of people, but it is the quality and capacity of those EVs to make a change and to manage to change things in their own realities. ... So, I don't know if the challenge is to involve more people in EV... or to support those that are already in EV to deliver the change that they are trying to implement or achieve. [Alumni 2018]*

*I would want EV programme to reflect on whether it builds elitism or builds capacity in LMICs. [Alumni 2018]*

Global reach with a focus on the global south was identified as a unique characteristic of the network that could be better leveraged. This was linked to the largely unmet potential of the network in terms of thought leadership and advocacy. Whilst there were individuals within the network who were seen as fulfilling roles of thought leadership and advocacy, it was felt that the network itself could do more in particular to be a constructively disruptive voice, to challenge orthodoxy and neo-colonialism, and to ask critical questions. Its global reach was also identified as giving it a unique perspective. The network was described as being a 'conduit' to allow collective voice under the EV4GH name. This was particularly useful for alumni whose professional position made it difficult for their individual voice to be heard. However, informants identified the difficulty of agreeing a stance and position pieces across such a diverse network as well as the lack of a platform for internal discussion. There was a recommendation that the pro-equity core values of the network should be more explicitly stated.

*I think the network has amazing potential to be a good hurricane – the constructive kind. I think we could throw some monkey wrenches in the wheel and we need to do more of that. [Alumni 2014]*

Linked to both making an impact and thought leadership and advocacy was the role of the network in facilitating opportunities and collaboration. The importance of access to opportunities and international networks was highlighted as being particularly crucial for researchers based in LMIC institutions compared to HIC institutions and for small faculties/schools of public health. However, informants felt that more could be done to facilitate collaboration between alumni and there was the potential to form strategic partnerships with institutions to provide for example internship opportunities for alumni.

*We [EV] are different petals from the same rose but we rarely integrate well and do not move forward in terms of action. [Alumni 2010]*

Some informants identified that there was insufficient strategic thinking within the network to be able to prioritise how best to leverage the network going forward. This resulted in a lack of focus and a tendency to focus on delivering the next venture which gave opportunities for alumni with a passion for capacity strengthening but less space for those focussed on policy change or advocacy. In addition, there were also different options for evolving the training experience provided by EV4GH and looking at diversity which also required strategic thinking. In the survey informants were asked to prioritise between six strategic options, synthesised from data derived from the key informant interviews, for the future of EV4GH. Each respondent was given a first and second choice from a list of strategic options and the ability to identify other options if not listed (see Figure 2). The top two prioritised options were facilitating collaborative research or projects and broadening the reach of the training through regional programmes. Stakeholders and partners interviewed, identified collective advocacy/activism as a key area that EV4GH should develop, however, this area was third overall in prioritisation from the survey respondents who were all alumni. This perhaps reflects the research focus of most alumni.

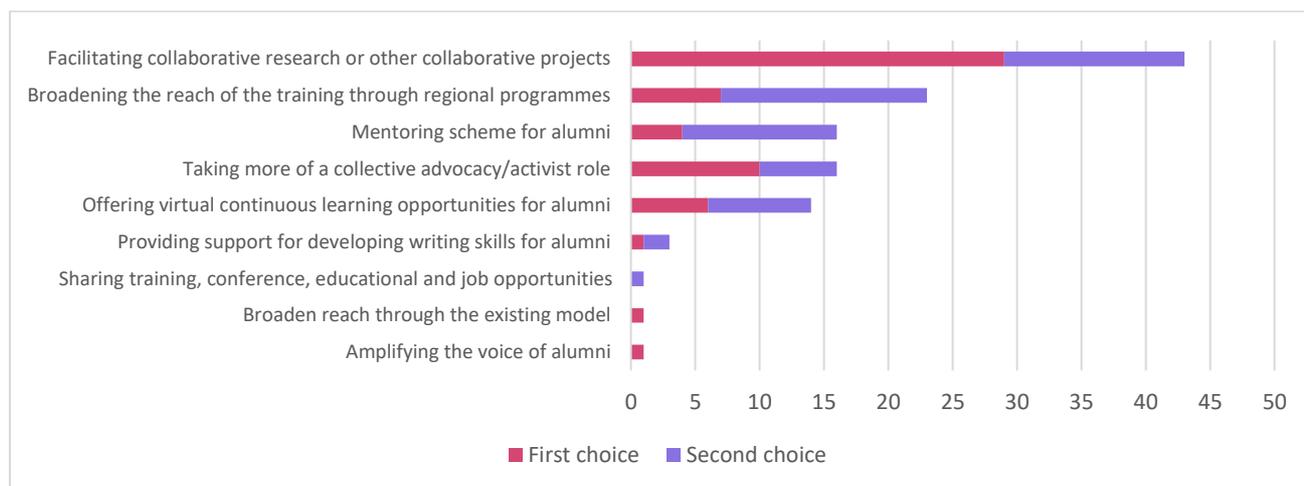


Figure 3 Frequency distribution of first and second choices of strategic focal areas for EV4GH from survey respondents (n=59)

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## Discussion

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The initiative is unique within the health policy and systems research space and is highly valued by partners, stakeholders, and alumni. However, there was widespread agreement that more could be done to maximise the initiative's potential niche role. The initiative has limited resources both financially and in terms of human resource and hence there is a need to decide on focal areas for action in order to maximise impact and unleash creativity in meeting agreed priorities. This requires the initiative to undertake some important strategic thinking and prioritise between equally valid strategic directions of advocacy and thought leadership, broadening reach, facilitating collaboration, and providing more support to existing alumni. This prioritisation does not preclude other areas from being focus areas in the future, however, without providing focus for action it is likely that the network will continue with unfulfilled potential. The network should consider undertaking a facilitated strategic review to produce a broad strategic plan for the next 10 years allowing

greater focus within that period. The information provided in this report on the perspectives of alumni and stakeholders can form important inputs into the strategic planning process.

## Recommendations

1. Commission facilitated development of a ten-year strategic plan

### Perception of the degree to which the purpose of EV4GH is aligned with partner organisations

This section reflects on the degree to which **EV4GH is aligned to the purpose of the partner institutions with which it works [A44]**.

The delivery of the EV4GH initiative depends on a series of strategic partnerships. These partnerships include those with ITM Antwerp, HSG, IPH Bangalore and the institutions that co-host ventures. This section will be limited to a discussion about the venture partners as the other relationships are discussed in more detail elsewhere.

It is clear from the reflections of partner respondents and ITM Antwerp staff, that these relationships are considered valuable.

*Co-hosts are absolutely important to make everything work and in establishing links and networks. They are not just any partner for the specific venture they are really key. [ITM Antwerp Staff]*

Partner staff noted that there was a strong alignment between the EV4GH outcomes and the changes they wanted to see in the sector. Beyond providing the support to the ventures themselves, the individuals within partner institutions have continued to contribute to EV4GH by encouraging their staff and students to apply for the programme; occasionally supporting cohort selection; and, participating in the ventures themselves as facilitators and guest lecturers. While definitely increasing the workload on the institution, the association with the initiative provided high reputational value to venture partner institutions, especially for those partners who were still developing their institutional reputation.

It was also noted that the relationships with EV4GH were largely individual rather than institutional strategic partnerships. Individual champions from the co-hosts have played a significant role in leveraging broader institutional resources in support of the ventures. While the venture focus was considered to be sufficient, there is a strong sense that there is potential for the venture partners to play a larger role in EV4GH.

*[It] still feels like individual relationships hold the partnerships together and there is a need to develop more institutional connections. I had the backing of [the leadership], I could write and ask for the staff time and the space. The fact that we were staff and we were hosting HSRS was why they did it, rather than backing the venture. [Partner staff]*

However, there were partner organisations, particularly where they were growing into the field, where the relationship was more at the institutional strategic level.

*We do wish to continue working with EV network. We do have that internal commitment from our Dean and the higher leadership given that the health policy unit has kicked off in the last two years. It has been growing immensely for this so very positive for us - to be part and parcel of emerging voices. we are looking forward to continuing working together [Partner staff]*

The relationship with these partner institutions generally tended to fall off over time, but this was generally considered to be a natural phenomenon.

*...when you have an active project there is a lot of energy and enthusiasm. It is hard after to keep it active. Even for the partners they need to gain something beyond having one or two EVs in the programme. [Alumni 2010]*

One partner organisation made a point of encouraging their staff and students to apply for EV4GH with the explicit intention of strengthening the organisation and building a critical mass of influencers in the institution. This sense of value extends in both directions, with people working on EV4GH articulating a strong belief of the importance of the relationship. Both partner staff and EV4GH staff indicated that they would like to develop more long-term relationships beyond the venture. There was a sense of greater potential for the partnerships. Some informants stated that from EV4GH's point of view, the role of the partners was becoming clearer through each iteration of the initiative. However, respondents on both sides noted the need to give some thought to what the relationship with EV4GH could provide partners in order to develop deeper and more strategic relationships.

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## Discussion

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There is strong alignment between EV4GH and its partners. Both parties see value in the partnership and are keen to develop the relationship further. It is however clear, based on the high proportion of EV4GH applicants being referred by venture partners, that the alignment of purpose remains and that there is a sense that there is definite value accruing to these institutions. There are concerns about the narrowness of the relationships – through individuals rather than at an institutional level – and a recognition to think about the strategic benefits to both sides in order to develop and sustain these relationships. Further reflection on partnership relationships is included later in this report.

There is great potential for a more strategic relationship between EV4GH and venture partners. It has allowed all partners to progress their ambition to create more opportunity for younger, southern practitioners to be more visible and active in the network. Over time the initiative has proven to be a very effective vehicle for this ambition and, as it has grown in prominence, become somewhat of a prestigious association to have in global health circles. Being associated with the initiative improves co-hosting institution's visibility and reputation in the sector and provides opportunity for broader networking and connection. This is over and above the capacity enhancement for staff and students who participate in the ventures and the network thereafter.

## Recommendations

1. Consider what post-venture processes could be developed to improve strategic engagement between EV4GH and venture partners

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## Perception of the degree to which EV4GH and HSG have a mutually beneficial relationship

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This section explores the perceived mutual benefit between HSG and EV4GH in particular that **HSG facilitates access to and platforms at the conference for EV4GH eg through being a TWG [A19]** and that **HSG values EV4GH contribution to the conference [A21]**.

The first EV4GH venture was linked to the first HSR Symposium in Montreux, and this link has continued at all subsequent HSR symposia. The first symposium highlighted the lack of any organisation for, or network, of health systems researchers, decision-makers and implementers. As a result, consensus was reached on the need to create an international society for health systems research, knowledge, innovation and action. Thus HSG was legally founded in October 2012 and was launched at HSR2012. HSG and EV4GH have been co-evolving since the formation of HSG in 2012.

There was wide agreement that the strategic relationship between EV4GH and HSG bring benefits to both, although informants expressed that greater delineation of activities and roles would be helpful. Informants

identified multiple benefits to both parties. The benefit of the biennial flagship HSR symposium cannot be underestimated, bringing funding and the wider HPSR community together and providing much needed exposure and networking opportunities to new EVs, whilst bringing vitality to HSRS. EV4GH always has a home and the local host institution provides both logistical and technical support to the venture. This was recognised by alumni and wider stakeholders.

*It is these biennial rituals and rhythms that give structure to the activities. For EVs it is a parent home with systems and resources. [Partner staff]*

*HSG very importantly provided an institutional home which is not a single northern university. From a symbolic perspective this is really important. [Alumni 2013]*

Participants benefit from the pre-conference and have greater access to the wider HPSR community before, during and after HSR symposia including a place on centre stage at the opening or closing plenary. However, one partner commented that EVs should be more visible and represented on every panel not just “backburner” panels or late sessions as had been the case in recent years. However this could create an exceptionalism position and it can be argued that participant’s already have the opportunity to be an ‘active’ public of those panels.

EVs reported gaining additional skills and perspectives as well as increasing their network. Alumni and participants felt they benefitted from visibility where they can become known and recognised. One of the alumni described being “part of something bigger” than just a training programme and having a place in which to grow and thrive. Another described how it expanded participant horizons and provided opportunities for employment internship and mentorship. There was widespread agreement that the training in EV4GH is boosted significantly by being able to immediately apply new skills within the symposium and engage in HSRS in a more meaningful way. Alumni feel that their voice is listened to; for example, in the 2018 closing plenary, EVs called for dedicated sessions on climate change. In HSRS 2020, EVs were involved in curating the programme including climate change sessions.

*We have always been asked to be on the opening or closing plenary for the HSR symposium... You do not get there just by being a TWG. We get visibility, we benefit and they do too. They are involving young people and I think that they do listen to EVs. [Alumni 2014]*

For HSG, alumni actions and voice contribute towards the reputation of HSG and the symposium; they gained a “youth wing”. Informants described a fusion of young voices as “a perfect incubator”, bringing a source of enormous energy, and youth voice from the global south. HSG has also benefitted from a quality pipeline of young, engaged and motivated alumni, many of whom have gone on to play instrumental roles in HSG governance and HSG TWGs. Some informants identified that the HSR Symposium would like wider engagement with early career researchers and not just EVs.

*For HSG it aspires to get young people working on health otherwise the conference would just be full of the same people doing the same thing for decades but there is an infusion of new blood every two years. [Alumni 2012]*

In 2015, EV4GH was accepted as a TWG of HSG. Key activities of the TWG have included organising EV4GH events at global health conferences; hosting webinars; arranging young researcher workshops; facilitating networking between different EV cohorts & regions; and Google Group thematic discussions. Each TWG is different in governance function and structure. Some are themed whereas others such as EV4GH do not have a thematic focus. All TWGs have the right to host an organised session at the main symposium and host a business lunch meeting. TWGs also have a formal line to the HSG Board and receive dedicated funding of

10,000 Euro every two years. HSG also provides scholarships to EV4GH participants from the global south whose abstracts are selected for presentation in the main symposium.

Whilst many alumni identified strong complementarity and mutual benefit with HSG, some informants felt this was a “complicated” relationship potentially affecting their autonomy as a young provocative group. One of the alumni commented on whether TWG membership tipped the balance to having a stronger HSR focus rather than activism.

*Being a TWG is a huge positive... But it has tipped the balance to be more health systems research rather than activism [ Alumni 2016]*

There was an initial expectation from some governance alumni that EV4GH would get more structural and funding support from HSG through integration of EV fundraising into HSG. This was reported as not happening as all TWGs are treated equally by HSG. Some felt constrained by TWG rules particularly in relation to independent fundraising although HSG stakeholders felt that EV4GH had missed opportunities of a closer working relationship with the HSG Secretariat particularly in relation to help with their fundraising strategy.

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## Discussion

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Both HSG and EV4GH are co-evolving as is their relationship; this presents a unique opportunity for dialogue whilst both entities are reviewing their purpose, structure and strategic direction. As HSG develops its new strategic plan, EV4GH has an opportunity to shape the relationship, building on potential synergies, and ensuring that the relationship is clearly defined and mutually beneficial. HSG is currently exploring how to expand its work regionally and EV4GH is participating in these discussions and initiatives. There is also an opportunity for EV4GH to further leverage their position as the youth voice for HSG and push for a stronger voice on HSRS panels. EV4GH should take this opportunity to also understand both the opportunities and constraints of their status as a TWG in relation to fundraising. Whilst many informants were aware of the constraints there was less understanding from EV4GH on the opportunities which from the perspective of HSG had been underutilised. This is discussed in more detail later in the report.

Whilst there were mixed opinions about whether the TWG structure is the right fit for EV4GH; its fluid and non-prescriptive structure has resulted in EV4GH leading an active and innovative TWG with its alumni benefiting from new skills in governance. There is an opportunity to talk to other TWGs and find out how they fundraise and leverage expertise within HSG such that EV4GH have better information about both the opportunities and constraints of being a TWG. One of the alumni suggested changing from a TWG to a 2-3 week summer school for young promising people, branded as an HSG programme. This could increase the reach and numbers benefiting from training and be a basis for a different conversation in relation to fundraising. The governing body may wish to consider looking at the potential costs and benefits of being recognised as a summer school. However, EV4GH has just submitted their reapplication for TWG status so this might need to be a medium-term goal if it created different opportunities within HSG.

### Recommendations

1. Conduct a scoping exercise to better understand both the constraints and opportunities to fundraising within HSG
2. Engage with HSG to better understand how HSG and EV4GH can complement their evolving strategic thinking including regionalisation and recognising the uniqueness of different TWGs

### Good practices

1. TWG membership builds capacity of select alumni in governance; many of whom have gone on to serve on the HSG board, executive committee and lead/participate in other TWGs

## 2. Strategic partnership with HSG - an important global platform in the field of health policy and systems research

### Perception of integration of EV4GH with policies and other projects at ITM Antwerp

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This section focusses on the integration and alignment of EV4GH within the broader ITM Antwerp programme and activities: reflecting on **integration at the project level within and between other ITM Antwerp initiatives [A08]**; and the **alignment of the programme and contribution towards the achievement of ITM Antwerp's policies e.g. 'Switching the Poles' [A42]**.

It was noted that the initiative was well connected in its early days because of its close alignment with the strategic ambition of the organisation and that it had the direct attention of the ITM Antwerp Director. Informed by conversations with current and past ITM Antwerp staff it was unanimously agreed that EV4GH contributes towards the achievement of ITM Antwerp policies and values – to give young researchers opportunity to have their voices heard, increasing the voice and representation of Southern researchers, while making a valuable contribution to their professional development through a relatively inexpensive set of activities. Respondents pointed to the increased visibility of the EV alumni in the HSRS and the stature of several alumni in global institutions as good indicators of progress.

*In my view it really touched the vision of what ITM stood for and is standing for -its core mission to help to give voice to the south to become involved in science. In building partnerships with the south to bring scientists from the south to the forum and especially young people. [ITM Antwerp staff/ex-staff]*

Positive engagements were noted in alumni contributions to the IHP newsletter, with several alumni providing editorial support, and also writing articles for the newsletter. It was also stated that EV4GH alumni were course participants, PhD supervisees, interns and project partners for ITM Antwerp providing a rich source of students and collaborations. But there was a general sense that although EV4GH is relatively well known in ITM Antwerp, it may not be sufficiently integrated or visible in the broader set of ITM Antwerp programmes.

ITM staff are involved in participant selection processes and contribute towards the development and delivery of the training programme. EV4GH receives funding from the scholarships programme of ITM Antwerp – a significant and important part of the institutions programme. However, one participant noted that the Directorate-general Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) for the Belgium government had limited visibility of EV4GH as a separate project within the portfolio and noted the need to connect ITM Antwerp and EV4GH in a more visible way. Several respondents noted that the connections were largely through individuals who worked directly with EV4GH, and that even in these instances this was largely restricted to the public health department. Some informants identified that there was potential to expand the connection beyond the departments that are currently engaged with EV4GH and to look for opportunities to connect EV4GH and alumni to other ITM Antwerp projects and initiatives. This was linked to the potential of EV4GH as a global network of researchers and activists in health policy and systems research with a shared interest in social justice.

EV4GH, in the opinion of one respondent, represented an opportunity to engage in cutting edge new thematic work, driven by the interest and experience of the alumni.

*I personally think that we need to make [the ITM Antwerp connections to EV] a bit more structural and more units in the public health department need to be more involved in this. [ITM Antwerp staff/ex-staff]*

Finally, one respondent suggested that the initiative was too closely connected to Antwerp and that it would be good to have regional hubs and not just one strong northern institutional partner.

*It would be good to have hubs... to have a number of learning sites... the EVs in the region [may] know where those hubs might [need to] be. [ITM Antwerp staff/ex-staff]*

This suggestion is linked to others about the potential for regionalisation of the EV alumni network and what strategic role the network can or should play in relation to both the initiative and in support of other institutions and initiatives. A more detailed conversation about regionalisation occurs later in this report.

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## Discussion

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**How well is EV4GH interlinked with other projects of ITM Antwerp? Should this be improved, how? Is the EV4GH initiative indeed a good example of ITM Antwerp policies e.g. switching the poles?**

EV4GH is well aligned with ITM Antwerp's mission, values and initiatives such as 'Switching the Poles'. Its focus on enabling early career researchers from the global south as well as its transfer of secretariat functions and the running of the project to institutions and individuals from the global south is a good example of 'switching the poles'. However, to some extent this process also reduces the ease in which EV4GH can integrate with other projects of ITM Antwerp. Indeed, integration with other ITM Antwerp projects is unlikely to be a priority for the board members. There are additional synergies that ITM Antwerp benefits from through: course participants, PhD supervision, internships, project participants.

On the one hand, better integration between ITM Antwerp and EV4GH would provide programmatic efficiencies and potentially open up new opportunities for both entities, but on the other the relationship seems to be working sufficiently well as it is. Careful consideration needs to be given to what and how better integration happens and whether this would be at odds with the 'decolonising global health movement'. This consideration should be guided by a strategic reflection that clearly outlines the benefits and challenges that this process might result in.

Ensuring that appropriate departments and staff members are aware of the network and the potential to reach out to a broad network of researchers across the globe appears to be a quick win, especially in the context of increased collaboration on research being a strategic goal of EV4GH.

### Recommendations

1. Ensure ITM Antwerp staff and Public Health Departments are aware of how to reach out to EV4GH for potential collaborations.

### Good practices

1. Commitment to and implementation of policies to redress inequities between the global north and global south

## Effectiveness

This section looks at both the activities within the EV4GH programme and the intermediary outcomes. Whilst increased attractiveness to funders is an intermediary outcome it is discussed under sustainability.

### Diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups within the EV4GH training programme

This section reflects on the diversity practice of EV4GH as it applies to the **reach of calls to participate in the initiative [A12]; the selection of participants; and the balance of researchers and activists participating in ventures [T01 and A13]**. The section also presents an analysis of the diversity of EV4GH participants based on the available data.

In several interviews both ITM Antwerp staff and alumni, indicated that the initiative was at its optimum level in terms of the number of participants who could engage and derive full benefit from participating in the venture. Important questions were also raised about the purpose of EV4GH and the implications that this would have on selection: Should EV be about those who need it most or those who could achieve the most? Should the focus of the initiative be on quality or quantity?

The total number of participants in the EV4GH programme ranged from between 30 in 2020 and 54 in 2010, with an average of 41 participants in each venture. Since the launch of the initiative in 2010 a total of 285 people have participated in the EV4GH initiative. The data collected by EV4GH on their alumni is neither gender nor language differentiated. Other than the fact the gender split at intake is roughly 50:50, no further conclusions about the diversity of the cohorts other than geographic can be discerned except through informants perceptions.

The initiative has a broad country reach. Over the years participants have been drawn from 66 different countries from every continent. Within the total number of participants, 6 countries (India, South Africa, China, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia) have contributed 39% (n=112) of the total number of participants in EV4GH.

The chart (Figure 3) illustrates the cumulative geographic distribution of alumni. There is a strong bias toward candidates of African origin followed by the Western Pacific, South East Asia and Pan-American regions. These global numbers do however mask some of the intra-regional and language diversity biases that emerged during the interviews.

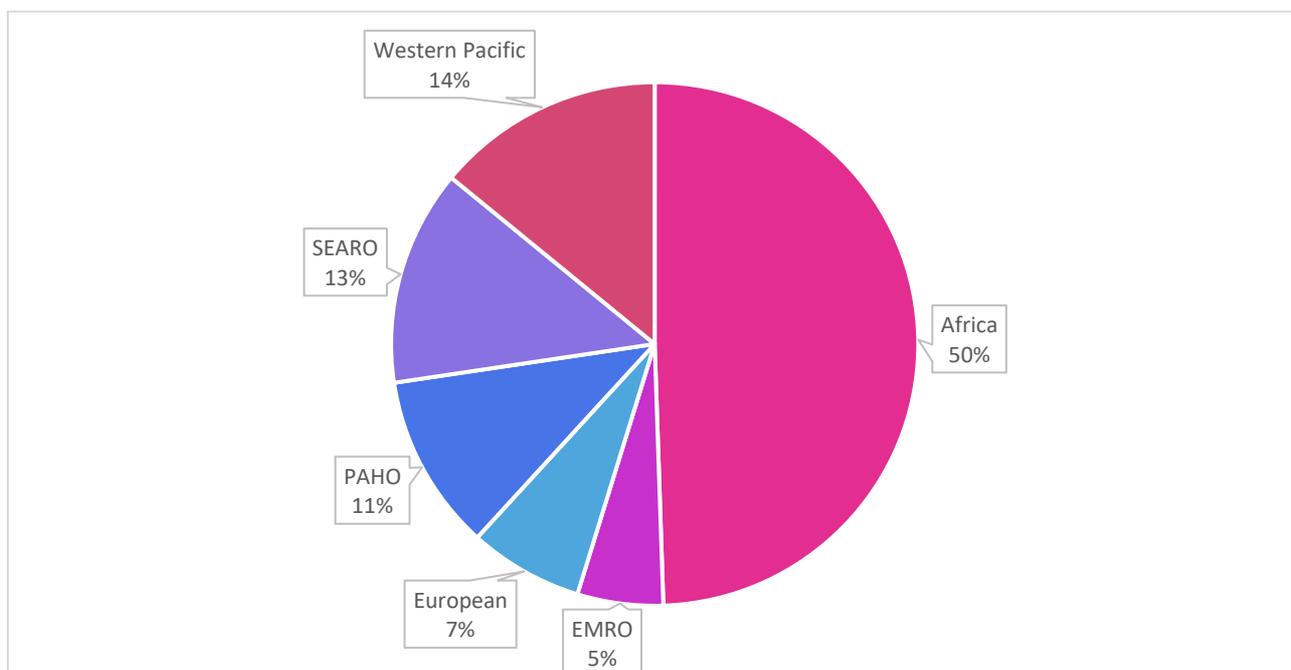


Figure 4 Regional distribution of EV4GH alumni (n=285)

The data for each venture year is fairly consistent, with an understandably large bias towards African participants in the 2013 Cape Town venture which was held in parallel with the International Conference on HIV and STI's in Africa (ICASA). The proportions of participants since 2014 suggests a deliberate intention to balance participation from the regions and to make the initiative more globally representative.

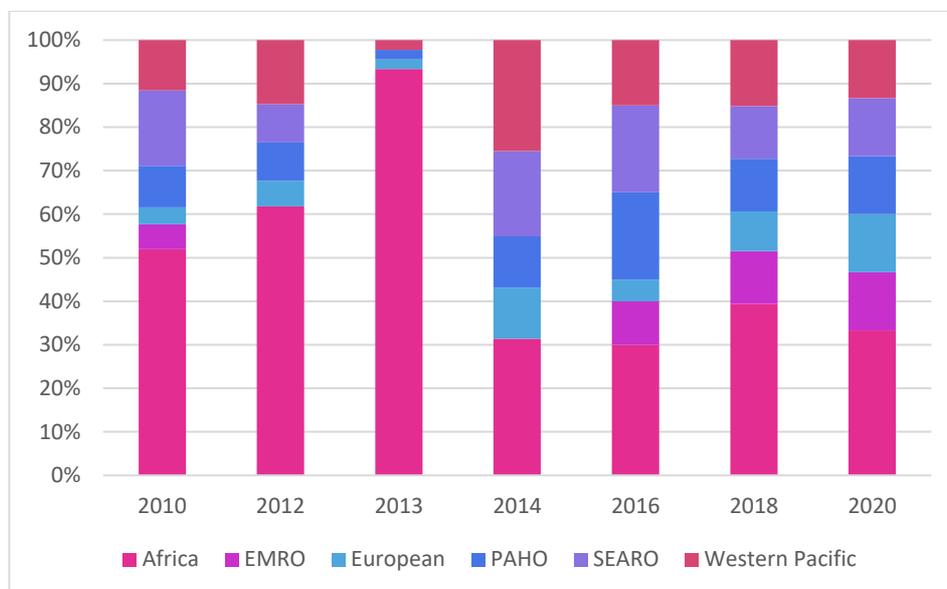


Figure 5 Percentage regional distribution of EV4GH participants by cohort (n=285)

Language and geographical diversity were considered to be important issues that needed to be reflected on. For example, while the Africa cohort is large, several respondents noted the difficulties associated with engaging Francophone countries. Language was also cited as potentially contributing to the limited numbers of participants from non-English speaking countries. Several non-English first language alumni did however see participating in a primarily English language initiative as a development opportunity. But language was also identified as a barrier to full participation in both the training and the network. In relation to language diversity, one significant contribution to diversifying the cohorts that was noted by alumni, has been the practice of translating calls into multiple languages. Translating the calls is possible because of the diversity of representation on the EV4GH Board, whose members took it upon themselves to provide translation support. However, widening the number of participants who are not fluent in English would necessitate addressing the barriers to full participation in the programme and network. These are discussed later in the report.

There were also geographical areas that were still underrepresented either regionally or in terms of individual countries. Some informants also raised that there were underrepresented groups from within countries for example indigenous peoples in HICs.

In terms of the balance between researchers and activists or policy makers there were mixed views. For some the balance was good but others questioned whether the programme was recruiting activists or researchers with a more activist focus. One respondent noted that it felt like some research applicants were “sneaking in” through the activist track and biasing the cohorts. Some informants felt that more needed to be done to bring in and nurture activists in the cohorts and that alternative criteria needed to be used for scoring application in track 2 (the activist track). There were opposing views that because of the strong linkage to HSRS - an academic conference – that the bias towards researchers should be maintained. Others had concerns about whether there is sufficient value in the ventures and in the network for activists to participate effectively and remain engaged in EV4GH. Several alumni reflected on the fact that this was not a binary conversation and that researchers often occupied an activist role. Thus, there was often a need to ‘wear both hats’.

*I think the activists are researchers it is according to the hat they decide to wear. Whether they have an activist hat on or a research hat on. They are not just activists. Those activists are just researchers that have a passion. [Alumni 2010]*

Others however, felt that it was important to find a better balance and to be more accommodating of non-academic participants. They felt that a stronger activist cohort would improve the advocacy potential of the

network. After an informal evaluation in 2016 (Sara & Raoul), there was a deliberate decision to recruit more activist researchers. This tension between EV4GH as advocacy and/or researcher development network surfaced repeatedly. This is discussed in more detail later in this section.

A set of biases that are not easy to discern from data, but which was mentioned repeatedly in interviews is the tendency of the initiative to draw participants from particular institutions – partner and more prestigious institutions. Linked to this, is a perception that alumni, while southern in terms of nationality are either working from or have strong associations with prestigious, northern institutions. In addition, most participants from the global south were identified as coming from privileged backgrounds. Participants who raised this reflected on whether this was in keeping with the values/ambition of the programme. The need for disability inclusion was mentioned in one instance.

Very few reflections were made on gender diversity with a general sense that there was an adequate gender balance in all of the cohorts. What was notable, however, was that barriers to participation post-venture were gendered. Several women respondents reflected the challenges of being able to commit to network activities when juggling the demands of family, career, and active participation in the network. Some consideration might need to be given to this issue in the light of the expressed need to increase the active volunteer pool and to remain true to principles of equity.

When asked about which underrepresented EV4GH should focus its selection on over the next few ventures alumni survey respondents (n=59), were split in their views (see Table 3). There is small but clear preference towards improving the activist/academic ratio, maintaining a focus on geographically underrepresented voices and building stronger relations with less well-connected institutions in LMIC countries.

**Table 3 Focus areas preferred by alumni survey respondents to address underrepresented groups (n=59)**

Activist researchers	25.4%
Researchers from geographically underrepresented countries/regions including indigenous peoples/regions	25.4%
Researchers from LMIC based institutions with limited international links	20.3%
Emerging policy makers	18.6%
Researchers from non-anglophone regions	15.3%
Activists without a research focus	15.3%

Strategies for enhancing diversity suggested by informants included: quotas, getting specific funding for underrepresented groups and provided additional mentoring and support for them to make high quality applications, using regional hubs (alumni networks or existing HSG groups for example) or partners to better publicise and support potential underrepresented applicants, and expanding the programme to run off-shoot programmes regionally and in that way reach a larger group of people.

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## Discussion

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Diversity and a bias to the global south is highly valued by participants who suggested that the diversity contributed to greater empathy and understanding of different contexts and cultures. This, it was felt, enables participants to locate their learning globally and to broaden their networks and access to new perspectives, opinions and issues that would have not been possible without participation in EV4GH. Diversity was also considered important for enhancing peer learning which is a key component of the programme. EV4GH was widely praised for its commitment to and enactment of enabling underrepresented groups to develop their voice within the health systems research and policy space.

However, there were areas identified as still needing attention: some language groups and geographies were underrepresented; there is sense of ‘class bias’ with participants perceived to be drawn from privileged groups

in LMICs; lack of visible/deliberate participation of indigenous peoples and marginal communities from HICs; low participation of participants from institutions in LMICs without strong HIC collaborative links; and a bias towards candidates with links to partners. It is recommended that during a strategic review process, that EV4GH decides where they want to focus in terms of diversity. With the small numbers of participants per cohort it is not possible to be globally representative across many different diversities.

Of ongoing debate and discussion was the balance between activists, activist/researchers and researchers. This tension is possibly linked to a concern that the network needs to be doing more and being more visible in the global advocacy space. It will be important to resolve the tension between having participants with high potential to influence the global discourse and increasing the participation of underrepresented groups who may not have had the same opportunities to build their skills and hence have the same potential.

From the perspective of the evaluators though, this tension may not be significant given that many of the alumni see themselves as activist researchers. They see their research as activism rather than research for activism and that EV4GH supports them to have clarity of communication and to be better able to get people to engage with rigorous well thought through articles or arguments. The intention is not to dilute research but rather to be able to improve engagement with high quality research to inform change. This issue is discussed in the Communicating Better Case Study (Output 1) page 39.

Having fewer activists and more researchers is a comfortable space for the initiative, but if EV4GH wants to challenge and be more challenging, more activist participants and alumni are needed in the cohorts. In order to support this, EV4GH will need to encourage and support more activists to apply, to pay greater attention to how applicants are scored; will possibly need to relook at the content of the programme; and adjust the network offering post venture.

The inclusion of underrepresented language groups, populations and regions is a complex one. While there are suggestions that language diversity is necessary, it would definitely complicate the delivery of the training and create the potential for a less cohesive group experience. However, it is worth considering how greater language diversity could be achieved without impact on the spirit and cost of the initiative.

Some underrepresented regions suffer from the inadequacy of the northern/southern definition upon which the initiative is premised. For example, marginal populations from HICs are not included in the programme despite having a stronger alignment with the experience of counterparts in LMICs. Similarly, participants from the former Soviet Bloc experience some prejudice because of the perception of them coming from HICs as they are clustered into the European Region. These issues cannot be addressed through a blanket position and some consideration and choice will need to be made to address these issues specifically - again, in a manner which does not impact on the core purpose of EV4GH in a negative manner.

It may be that choosing to address particular underrepresented groups linked to the location of the conference is one possible solution. For instance, in Bogota increasing representation of South and Central America could be a focus. The conference being located in Vancouver could have presented an opportunity to actively engage with First Nation communities. Other ways that the regional nature of the venture may present opportunities for the initiative to address diversity issues include reserving places for local community activists and connecting to their projects/programmes as part of the exposure visits that participants undertake. This is potentially a low-cost solution that brings a new dimension. Institutions in the area that have few international connections could also be targeted for partnership. Again, this could be a relatively low-cost strategy that provides value to local organisations by connecting them to academic institutions and other local and global networks and establish new local networks for participants.

Gender balance was widely accepted as being good, but an area to keep in consideration in the future is monitoring the effect of any gendered barriers to participation during or post-venture given that several

female participants noted their fall off in participation post venture was due to prioritising their family and care responsibilities.

### Recommendations

1. Decide on where EV4GH focus on diversity will be in the next few ventures given that it is impossible to be truly diverse in small participant numbers
2. Use opportunities of the location of the conference to expand specific diversities; geographic, institutional, activist groups
3. HSG's regionalisation agenda may open up new opportunities to expand diversity in the medium-term; leverage these rather than setting up parallel structures
4. In addition to the focus on young researchers, decide on whether the focus is on activists or research activists and/or policy makers and then address the advertising, application, potential partnerships and course content to meet the specific needs of these groups

### Good practices

1. Translating calls into multiple languages
2. Preference to participants from the global south
3. Commitment to and enactment of ensuring diverse groups in terms of regions and gender
4. Having different tracks for more research focussed or more activism focussed applicants

## Perception of the quality of the blended learning offered by EV4GH

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This section looks at the perception of the quality of the learning offered by EV4GH by looking at the **mix of capacity strengthening techniques used in the programme [A28]**, perceptions of whether the **innovative blended learning programme focussed on contemporary global health related issues and equity [T02]**, the **level of engagement with the programme [A14]**, **access to leading teachers and thinkers within the programme [A17]**, and finally the **degree to which the learning programme remains innovative [A16]**. It also discusses whether **there is a mix of capacity strengthening activities (including coaching, mentoring) [A28]**

The learning programme was widely commended as providing high value to the participants. The blended learning programme uses a mix of learning approaches including discussions, debates, skills building sessions, expert talks, role playing, world cafés, and health system visits to local providers. Informants felt that the online element amplifies the face-to-face element but that face-to-face was vital. Partly due to the deep connection that participants made as a cohort through the learning experience.

The health system visits allowed participants to reflect on differences in health systems globally and to understand the local context better. The experience of attending the learning programme and HSRS was often a first for participants – the first time outside their own country, the first time at an international conference, the first time to make a presentation at an international conference, the first time to use social media (especially but not exclusively limited to the older cohorts), first time to blog, first time to be on a panel. Informants identified that the EV4GH programme created a safe space where they felt supported by their peers and the facilitators in these formative experiences. The peer learning and connection was cited across the board as being deeply important and is discussed in more detail later in this report. Between 20 and 35 facilitators were reported as being involved in delivering the online and face to face elements of the programme across the different ventures.

After the face-to-face element, participants have a chance to put their learning into practice through attendance at HSRS. Participants engagement with HSRS was deepened through designated EV4GH sessions, networking opportunities, and a contribution to the opening or closing session. Informants stated that as a result they had higher confidence and were able to engage more effectively at the conference. Overall informants felt that the training was well structured.

*EV4GH gave me many firsts. Coming from a difficult background; I travelled for the first time internationally myself. It was liberating. Rich experience learning from peers. Training on exciting methods of presenting and facilitating. I wrote my first piece for IHP ... I felt for the first time that I could say something that people could relate to and would be valued. I tweeted for the first time... All these firsts were a strong foundation. [Alumni 2016]*

The online phase of the programme was seen as useful by most informants however, it did not have the same catalysing and motivating effect as the face-to-face programme. Some informants identified that it was useful in getting participants to the same level before the face to face but that meant that content was basic for some with less experienced participants gaining more from this phase of the training. Some informants stated that the communication techniques covered during the online phase were not very innovative or new. Many informants stated that it would always be different from and not a replacement for face-to-face interaction. There were two criticisms of the programme made by informants. The first was the interactivity and/or design of the online platform. There was feedback that the Moodle system used for the online training was dated and difficult to navigate. The system used by HSG was found to be much easier to navigate and it was recommended by one informant to utilise that system instead. In addition, feedback was given that it would be good to build in more interactivity and to be more cell phone friendly. Another major criticism was the variability in the receipt of feedback on submissions during the online phase of the training. Participants felt that feedback was important in motivating engagement and the lack of it particularly during the latter phases of the online training in 2020 was demotivating. In general participants from 2020 felt that the requirement to go purely online in 2020 due to the pandemic resulted in a lesser experience for this cohort. It should be noted that EV4GH are still planning to host a face to face component in Dubai, in November 2021, for the 2020 cohort.

*It feels like we are plateauing [commenting on 2020]. Because in the last engagement there is always something very new and mind blowing... Usually these things come out in the face to face. HSG is a stage and a platform. In terms of the virtual space there are not those innovations yet. [Alumni 2016]*

*From peers and mentors the feedback and interaction was less. I think maybe they were busy. The bonding was less. I think that was missing in the Covid batch. [Alumni 2020]*

The face-to-face training programme content is a mix of innovative communication formats, knowledge translation and thematic modules partly driven by the symposium focus areas. Participants identified that participation in the course was 'exciting' and 'thrilling'. For some the thematic talks, discussions and debates were described as 'eye opening' and as helping recognise cross cutting themes of potential use in their future careers. For many informants the debates were particularly welcomed as something that they were not exposed to in their normal academic or professional environments. It was pointed out that by virtue of selection, alumni were largely aligned in their thinking. The encouragement to develop their critical and provocative thinking and communication through these types of sessions was appreciated by informants. Additionally, the encouragement to be creative through role plays, elevator pitches and EVT was also deeply appreciated by participants. A key positive feedback on the content was that it was practically useful to early career researchers and hence highly valued. Questions were raised about the degree to which sufficient thought had gone into making the activist/policy maker track sufficiently different and shaped to their needs.

*I thought it will be some face to face and online like any other training programme. But when I arrived and went for a few days it was a really different programme. It was thrilling. [Alumni 2016]*

*Usefulness was connecting to a community of researchers that otherwise you would not be connected with. Intense debates that took place on equity, what does it mean to have contextual research. That rich debate was important. [Alumni 2016]*

Most informants were positive about the quality of the learning programme. One informant stated that they felt that the course content and delivery in 2020 compared favourably with other topflight academic online courses they were participating in. However, it was stated that as the programme was reliant on volunteers, quality may vary and one informant raised a question about how skilled volunteers could be across a variety of techniques. This created a tension between innovation and developing a more focussed expertise. The importance of feedback and mentoring to the learning programme experience led some to question the optimum size of the course to ensure sufficient investment of time in each participant. One informant stated that 25 was optimal. The length of time for the face-to-face element of the venture has shortened over the ten years of EV4GH and some informants, particularly earlier alumni, felt this was doing a disservice to participants and did not allow justice to be done to the programme.

Some areas identified by informants as missing or with the potential to be further strengthened within the programme were: career development, scientific communication, bridging evidence to policy, building trust within the global health landscape, amplifying your voice, and how to create impact working with policy makers. It should be noted that some of these areas may have been strengthened in subsequent sessions to the ones attended by the informants. Some informants felt that there could have been a greater focus on the content of the research that was being presented at the conference, although this was a small number of informants and is outside the stated aims of the learning programme.

Enablers to full participation in the programme were motivation, support from peers, and personal history (ie the training came at the right time and focussed on the right things for individuals). Barriers to engagement included language, timing, connectivity problems, and a lack of motivation (already linked above to a lack of feedback). In general, it was reported that there were high levels of engagement in all elements of the face-to-face phase. However, informants identified that it was much more difficult to engage with the online phase often having to juggle investment in the programme, with work and personal priorities. Even with the increased flexibility of asynchronous elements, participants identified it was difficult to find time to complete reading. Additionally, informants stated that they faced connectivity issues which had been exacerbated during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Informants valued exposure to leading scholars and ideas within the programme and then through exposure to HSRS. The willingness of senior experts to participate in the programme was reported as good by informants who help organise the ventures. It was stated that EV4GH had become more intentional about having as many speakers as possible who were cutting edge thinkers from the global south as part of the decolonisation agenda. Prominent alumni were also invited to speak providing an additional dimension of exposure to role models; however busy schedules were a barrier to participation. Informants identified that some of the speakers had a significant influence on their thinking and perspectives and described how compelling speakers added to the energy and enthusiasm of EV participants.

*They exposed us to leading scholars and we grappled with ideas. [Alumni 2018]*

There is a distinction between whether informants perceived the initiative as being innovative and whether the content and methods of the training programme remained innovative. In general, informants felt that the initiative itself was unique in the health policy and systems research arena with its focus on empowering diverse groups of young people particularly from the global south to have voice within the sector and their own networks, and was thus classed as innovative. However, some informants particularly from partner organisations felt that the energy and fresh air that EV4GH originally brought to the HSRS space had been diluted over the years. This was tempered by the fact that EV4GH still has a powerful role within what is now an established global conference. The need to conform to HSRS norms in presentations and recruitment criteria (typical of global symposia) was also seen as a potential barrier to being a disruptive force within the

conference. The need to keep a strong focus and passion for social justice and not become just another training programme was identified, as was a constant need to evolve in order to remain relevant.

*It definitely was innovative and in its evolution it has maintained the energy and spirit of that. [Partner]*

Whilst the communication training was still highly valued by participants, many of whom identified it as being innovative, some informants who had been involved in various ventures felt that it had become less cutting edge whilst remaining focussed on important skills. To some extent this was identified with other training providers 'catching up' with innovations from EV4GH. However, some felt that the content had been diluted e.g. a focus on doing a good PowerPoint rather than using alternative presentation tools or solely images. Others involved in the 2020 venture cited new innovations such as commenting on documentaries/movies, podcasting, video responses and using Instagram. One informant highlighted that there was further scope to delve into unrest and tensions within the global health field in the technical content of the training.

The EV4GH governance board are responsible overall at a macro level for the content of each venture but the alumni volunteers who are responsible for either the distance element or the face-to-face element have 'a great deal of discretion as everyone is time poor'. The co-host partner also has a role in the programme development and provides a number of speakers. An example of changes to the content decided at board level was the addition of issue and policy briefs. However, informants identified that there was no systematic way in which a watching eye was kept on innovation. Barriers to innovation identified by informants were lack of expertise, lack of time and hence a tendency to build on previous materials as well as risk aversion amongst less experienced volunteers. The wholly online nature of the 2020 venture was also seen as a barrier to innovation and utilisation of the normal catalysing elements of the programme. Involvement of activists in the process, however, was seen as a push factor for innovation. A recommendation that came from informants was to spend more time reflecting on the previous venture in terms of what worked well and what needs to change and then have an intentional planning process over a longer period to provide more time to think about innovation in relation to the programme's goals.

*I think when we are trying to push the envelope – we do. There is energy and enthusiasm to think about how to ensure we have really compelling speakers, that we are making sure that the skills building is relevant and not just PowerPoint. ...[Alumni 2016]*

*We are not always that intentional about being innovative [Alumni 2016]*

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## Discussion

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The power of the learning experience of EV4GH comes from selecting and bringing together a diverse group of talented individuals at an early stage of their career who will respond to the catalysing call for social justice, using a range of innovative capacity strengthening techniques, and enabling them to immediately utilise their new skills in an important global conference. Alumni clearly found the face-to-face experience energising and motivating and forged friendships and strong relationships that have sustained long after the venture. The exposure to other points of view from peers is also a core element of the learning and is discussed in more detail later in this report. Peers also motivate each other to achieve more and strive to improve their presentation skills as they see what is possible within their own peer group. It has repeatedly been found that a key success factor in short-term training interventions is the that skills learned are quickly and repeatedly put into practise after the training – hence the link to the HSRS is a crucial synergy for the training programme.

The training programme benefits from the close bonds that are made between the participants and the facilitators. There is an optimum number of participants between 25-40 over which the benefits of the programme may be diluted. EV4GH should decide on the optimal number of participants for this training and an optimal number of facilitators. This will assist in ensuring quality but also in budgeting and fundraising.

Whilst the majority of alumni informants were researchers, there were some who raised concern about the suitability of the content for participants who were not so research focussed e.g. activists without a research focus or policy makers. If either of these groups are targeted for recruitment in the future, it is recommended that a needs analysis process and careful thought is taken into what elements can be mainstreamed with the research participants and whether bespoke elements of the programme are needed. In addition, whilst the main programme is in the English language mirroring the major research forums and platforms around the world, further thought would be useful in how non-native English speakers can be enabled to have fuller engagement not only during the training but also in the network. Holding some of the debates and discussions sessions in their native language may be feasible during the training. This should be dependent on the location of the conference and/or numbers of participants from non-English speaking countries.

The need to go completely online in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic underlined the importance of the face-to-face element and the difficulty of getting protected time to fully experience virtual conferences or training. EV4GH are committed to ensuring that training will continue to be a blended programme (as it has been from the very beginning) with a mix of virtual & face to face. Creating a feeling of community within groups online is a difficulty that many are struggling with, but it is also an opportunity for creativity and innovation. There is an opportunity for EV4GH to be at the forefront of innovation in online thinking about how to facilitate participation and discussion in the online spaces. Potential strategic partners who are working in this space could be identified and approached. The useability of the online training platform (Moodle) would benefit from review and potential upgrade. There is an opportunity to decide whether this is an area for additional investment within the next funding application. This is an area that could also potentially benefit the network (discussed later). One key area of criticism was the variability of feedback given during the fully online programme. It is recommended that there is a system for tracking feedback given to participants and that this is reviewed by the group of facilitators to ensure an equal experience for participants and foster accountability amongst the facilitators.

Whilst informants felt that the initiative was unique and innovative some concerns were raised as to whether EV4GH was keeping itself at the cutting edge, particularly in regard to communication techniques where the conference space was now seen to have caught up. In regard to hot topics in global health, content was seen as current, although there was some room to explore the more difficult tensions or issues in the field. In terms of content the main barriers to innovation were over reliance on previous designs, risk aversion, lack of knowledge and lack of time. Some ways to circumnavigate these barriers would be having a structured planning process starting much earlier. This would allow time to horizon scan for new ideas, give a clear strategic commitment to innovation and risk within the training programme content and grant the designers of the venture more space for creativity. The governance team could hold them to account and look for strategic partners who are specifically focussed on cutting edge in communications. This would mean pushing the design of the venture into the 'fallow' year between ventures. This greater effort might require remuneration for the person/s responsible for this work and will also depend upon the strategic choices made by the EV4GH governing body.

### **Recommendations**

1. Focus on innovation in online and face to face learning communities – for the venture and the network
2. Ensure horizon scanning for innovation in communication techniques between ventures
3. Identify funding to review and update the online learning platform for user friendliness and ability to innovate, linked to an upgraded alumni platform
4. Ensure clear planning for ventures which includes work in the intermediate year
5. Decide on optimum numbers for a venture in order to be able to give a gold standard experience and provide a target for fundraising for scholarships
6. Complete a needs assessment and design bespoke elements of the programme (if future ventures focus on having participation from non-research focussed participants)

7. Track feedback given to participants to ensure equal experience and accountability
8. Agree strategic commitment to innovation and risk within the content of the training programme

#### Good practices

1. Variety of learning experiences
2. Formation of learning community – partly through selection process, intensity of experience, and right stage of career
3. Opportunity to use skills immediately through participation in HSRS
4. Inspirational speakers
5. Exposure to role models
6. Exposure to diverse group of peers
7. Hosting local health systems visits

### Perception of the experience and benefit of participating in Health Systems Research Global Symposium and/or other global health spaces as part of EV4GH

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This section explores **participation and platforms at Health Systems Research Global Symposium and other global health spaces [T03]** and the assumption that **EV4GH participants actively engage in the HSRS events and networking opportunities[A20]**.

HSRS was perceived by informants as a ‘friendly’ conference, and for EVs, they identified the benefit of being in a supportive group of people at more or less the same stage in their careers, with similar concerns and insecurities. Participants identified the pre-conference training as adding real value to the programme in terms of debate, feedback, innovative learning methods and being coached to have greater impact in the main symposium. It provided a strong foundation to participate in HSRS; participants described feeling like part of a family and feeling less intimidated and junior. EV participants also benefited from the dedicated slot for meeting HPSR experts one day in advance of the main Symposium. Connecting face to face within the pre-conference and main symposium was of huge benefit, particularly for those from the global south who often lacked exposure to senior researchers and policy makers in the HPSR arena. This contributed to their confidence and ability to network in the main symposium and made the training more meaningful, rather than being “just an academic exercise”.

*I have attended several international conference, but in the HSRS I found the participation is the most meaningful. I was well prepared with the content and skills to communicate and how to ask questions and how to engage. [Alumni 2018]*

HSRS 2020 participants had less exposure to senior policy makers, academics, and practitioners due to the online format for 2020 (It should also be noted that overall the HSR2020 experience was less positive than normal for all delegates due to the limitations of a virtual symposium).

The intensity of training meant some participants felt they had peaked pre-conference, feeling exhausted by the main conference. One of the alumni described their unease of being part of an “exclusive club” that other early career researchers who were not part of the initiative may feel excluded from. However other alumni described how without the funding they would never have had the opportunity to participate and present in such a relevant global conference which is widely regarded as the leading HPSR space. For many this was their first exposure to participating in an international conference and having the platform to share their research and to present and argue their views.

*We went through the whole period before, during and after with peers. For many of us it was our first ever global conference. So, I would say having this combination is a unique experience. [Alumni 2014]*

The biennial conference was identified as a good way to continue engagement, but was also dependent on funding, time and being granted a visa. Location determines how accessible the conference is and several examples were given by informants of people being denied visas for HSR 2018 in Liverpool, UK.

Other benefits of participation in HSRS related to opportunities to get involved in HSG through TWGs and the Board and through this gaining new skills in leadership and governance. Many alumni are now leading other TWGs and are in executive roles eg SHAPES TWG, teaching TWGs and the HSG Board.

Alumni described less systematic participation and representation of EV4GH in other global health spaces where the EV4GH brand was not necessarily well known. However, alumni did meet up with each other at other conferences and felt a sense of support and connection even if they had not met previously. EVs had the strongest connection and loyalty to HSG and HSRS and they described a sense of belonging and recognition within this space which was hard to replicate elsewhere.

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## Discussion

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There is clear benefit for delivering the face-to-face EV training linked to HSRS. Participants get to practice their skills immediately in a prestigious, highly relevant, and friendly global conference which is interesting and dynamic. The training is at the right time for the participants stage of career which provides a unique and appreciated capacity building opportunity that is unusual in most training programmes. Membership and active participation in the EV4GH TWG and other HSG TWGs provide additional exposure to governance and networking in broader areas of interest. Whilst EVs enjoy the networking and increased visibility that HSRS avails with dedicated EV sessions and panels, there is also an opportunity for EVs to be more 'active' public of those panels in which they are not represented. EV4GH could also do more engagement with other early career researchers at the symposium to further amplify young voices and address the issue of exclusivity. This could involve skills building seminars, inspirational talks, and informal networking sessions during the symposium. It is important that this is light touch as volunteer facilitators are already overburdened and there is a need to be careful not to dilute the power of the EV4GH training and its branding. Currently there is very little organised engagement outside of HSRS, however, due to limited resources. It is recommended that focus remains on cementing and evolving the relationship with HSG rather than looking for new partners or conference platforms.

### Recommendations

1. Look for cost-effective ways of engaging additional early career researchers at HSRS to broaden reach and counter danger of exclusivity
2. Focus on evolving and creatively stimulating the relationship with HSG rather than reaching out to new platforms

### Good practices

1. Training and preparation that focuses both on improving oral and poster presentation skills but also on how to maximise networking opportunities at the conference
2. Face to face training and pre-conference linked to HSRS so participants can immediately put skills into practice
3. Enabling meaningful, critical and provocative EV engagement within the leading HPSR global conference
4. Dedicated EV4GH sessions, panels and a place in the opening or closing ceremony of HSRS

Perception of the opportunities provided through EV4GH to publish, blog or utilise other innovative communication formats

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This section relates to **motivation and platform for publication, blogging, social media, and other innovative communication platforms [T04]** and the underlying assumption that **EV4GH participants/alumni receive**

**sufficient guidance and encouragement to produce quality written outputs including via innovative formats and platforms [A22].** It also explores the assumption that **appropriate platforms are available and capitalised on by EV4GH and alumni [A29].**

When Wim Van Damme was organising ITM Antwerp's annual scientific colloquium in Antwerp in 2010 with his younger colleagues, they wanted to avoid dull symposia in which "boring PowerPoint presentations were delivered by ageing and established public health elite."<sup>4</sup> Thus the underlying premise of EV4GH was a "disruptive idea"; to give a voice to young researchers and activists from the global south through providing an innovative, nurturing programme of learning and peer support.

*To have global health symposia that would be truly "global", showcase innovative presentation methods that would convey messages clearly to a global audience, and most importantly, that would include 'young professionals' prominently at international conferences, till then dominated by authoritative names featured in keynotes and panels. [Alumni 2014]*

The training element provided the foundation and environment in which to motivate and nurture participants to use innovative communication formats and confidently access different platforms through which to communicate. The communications strand of the EV learning programme aims to increase awareness of the need to communicate better to lay audiences and to translate research, which is often a missing component in academic programmes. The focus on communication techniques included writing and publishing blogs, effective use of social media, oral and poster presentations, fishbowls, panel discussions, round tables, world cafes, role plays and networking.

Participants joined the programme with varying skill levels and experience in the application of different and innovative communication formats. Some participants when joining the programme had never presented in an academic conference, had never published, tweeted, nor blogged. However for others, writing, blogging, webinars, and videos were already areas they were familiar with. Some were also influencers on social media through Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. The combination of the immersive learning experience with like-minded young activists and researchers, the spirit of camaraderie, being encouraged to be bold and proactive was reported to be catalysing by inexperienced and experienced participants alike. Alumni described feeling empowered to claim their space and get their voice out there.

*When some EVs write powerful editorials in BMJ GH, other saw it is doable...It is better when people claim their spaces rather than being engineered [Alumni 2010]*

The training at the pre-conference increased not only their confidence but also the opportunity to write and communicate using different formats outside of traditional academic publishing.

*EV has given me the confidence that you do not have to be a big name; it is about having something to say and the right networks. This is EV [Alumni 2010]*

Participants valued the support and guidance from the facilitators, mentors and their peers to develop their skills in poster and oral presentation so as to maximise their impact at HSRS. This included using (what was at the time) innovative presentation formats such as 'Pecha Kucha' and tools like Prezi.

*I dared to use the 'Pecha Kucha' style of presentation in my first ever oral presentation at an international conference during the Third Global Symposium on Health Systems Research [Alumni 2014]*

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<sup>4</sup> EV4GH, Message from the Founding Father pp 3-4, 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Digital Magazine, 2020

New Twitter users described how they embraced Twitter, setup Twitter accounts during the training and made their first tweets during HSRS. One of the alumni attributed the social media café as helping them navigate their way to becoming an influencer.

*The reason I am now part of the twitterati was through the social media café which I thought was really cool. It is not easy to get into an influencers space but I was able to get into those spaces. E.g. I talk to Tedros<sup>5</sup> on WhatsApp that was through twitter. [Alumni 2014]*

Several respondents indicated that they now blog in their professional capacities which they had not done before. This allowed them to communicate in alternative ways rather than relying only on more traditional academic publications. Alumni expressed that this enabled them to have a different more personal voice.

*I wrote this first blog ... it was the first time I wrote from my heart. English was my second language, before I wrote academic papers ... but I never expressed myself. [Alumni 2016]*

Alumni were encouraged and supported to write blogs as a route to shaping the narrative and discourse about things that really mattered to them. Informants also found this useful in providing a new way of thinking about writing academic papers.

*The ability to learn to blog and write in an interesting way, ask questions and push boundaries – very few offer this. This allows us to shape the narrative and discourse. These skills translate into thought leadership. [Alumni 2014]*

EV4GH has directly facilitated access for alumni to contribute to a range of communication platforms including the weekly IHP newsletter (a digest of key global health issues on policy, governance and research), EV newsletter and the EV4GH Google Group. The IHP newsletter is a product of ITM Antwerp and is the responsibility of Kristof Decoster who is also responsible for working on the EV4GH programme. Some alumni also hold editorial positions and proactively support and encourage alumni to write. This has particularly been the case for BMJ Global Health whose Editor-in-Chief is 2010 alumni, Seye Abimbola. Editorials, commentaries, op-eds and blogs from alumni have been published both in the IHP newsletter and BMJ Global Health. Alumni were highly motivated by the writing support and encouragement given to them particularly by Kristof Decoster and Seye Abimbola.

*EV4GH encouraged us to write blogs... The most memorable one was sitting with Seye, he sat with me for an hour and he published my first blog in BMJ GH. I could not believe I was sitting with the editor himself. In terms of support it is very motivating those experiences. [Alumni 2016]*

The IHP newsletter was viewed as an excellent platform for building capacity in writing blogs, with the “guarantee” of getting the blog published with support from Kristof. Alumni also identified that they had then been inspired to write for country level platforms, newspapers and HPSR groups.

*Publishing the editorial was my first publication ever and I would not have done it without EV. ...that gave me the confidence of saying that I can publish ... we do not need the super senior researcher or professor to be able to publish. The support was lighting the spark to encourage us to write something. [Alumni 2014]*

Successful applicants for ITM Antwerp/EV4GH residencies reported having protected time to develop critical thinking and research projects. They described how they were able to write up their ideas and publish across a range of platforms within a highly supportive environment. They were clear that without this support they would not have published as much or to the same quality as they were enabled to.

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<sup>5</sup> Refers to Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, 8<sup>th</sup> Director General of WHO

Whilst it is not currently a key aim of EV4GH to support young researchers to publish in reputable, peer reviewed journals some EVs felt that more could have been done to support them in countering the inherent bias to the global north as well as providing funding for open access journals. Perceptions varied as to whether participation in EV4GH had led to more publications. Some felt that they had not published more as a result of EV as this was already a requirement for their PhD. However, they recognised that EV training and access to peer mentors helped stimulate them to publish earlier and to produce better and more polished publications. Multiple examples were also given of alumni doing joint publications.

*A third of my publications since being an EV have been co-authored with EVs. [Alumni 2013]*

For some the ability to publish and blog depended on their institutional workplace. Barriers included navigating layers of bureaucracy in order to have permission to publish and also simply not having the time.

Peer-to-peer support (professional and personal) was considered to be extremely important and useful in relation to publishing and blogging. Some alumni also discussed the matched mentor scheme that was in place for the earlier cohorts (2010, 2012 & 2013) with the aim of having a joint publication as an output. This, however, had mixed success and was not repeated since. Currently, mentoring alumni to publish and blog was mainly done by three people (Kristof and Wim from ITM Antwerp and Seye from BMJ GH) and this was perhaps a too high burden. Those who received such support valued the critical comments which helped shape their writing and got them published in BMJ GH and other reputable high impact journals. Francophone EVs in particular did not feel they had sufficient support although the 2010 cohort were supported to publish in English or French. There was a recognition that as the network has grown and that many of the earlier EVs now edit journals, that there is an untapped potential for mentoring new cohorts.

## Output 1 Case Study: Communicating Better

*Realising that science and research are so much more about communication than I was taught in academics was a big paradigm shift for me. [Alumni 2014]*

### A simple concept

The underlying premise of the Emerging Voices Initiative is a 'disruptive idea': to give a voice to young researchers and activists from the global south through the provision of an innovative, nurturing programme of learning and peer support. This is linked to a global health conference where young researchers can immediately practice their learning and skills. Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) was initiated in 2010, and has run alongside Health Systems Global' biennial symposium ever since, with an explicit commitment to 'switching the poles' (i.e., shifting power from the global north to the global south).

### EV4GH principles

- enliven, energise and make global health events more vibrant
- improve the global health dialogue
- ensure voices from the global south are visible
- communicate effectively and confidently with different audiences
- influence and seek wider change in the health systems and global health communities through constructive disruption

### Learning by doing

EV4GH developed a blended learning programme focused on innovative communication formats, knowledge translation and hot topics in global health, using an equity lens. The programme deliberately selects early career researchers and activists in health policy and systems from the global south, interested in engaging critically on global health issues with local relevance to their country or local health systems.

The most transformative and immersive training period is the intensive face-to-face element held prior to the Health Systems Research Global Symposium. The communication element of the training is focused on giving oral and 'Pecha Kucha' type presentations, poster presentations, fishbowls, panel discussions, roundtables, world cafes, networking, blogging, use of social media, role plays and ways of engaging with policy makers. Unlike traditional training programmes, EVs immediately apply and practice their newly acquired skills at the Global Health Symposium.

### Finding their voice

Alumni cited that the most profound change, in terms of skills and attitude, was improved advocacy and communication. The ability to think critically and be confident to ask bold questions, increased their effectiveness as champions for social justice.

### A stronger voice

- understanding the need for better communication of research results
- learning how to use language matched to different audiences
- increasing skills across a range of communication channels and techniques
- better access to platforms to be heard (conference, blogging, Google Group, journals)

The combination of improved plain language writing skills in the form of blogs and opinion pieces, increased confidence in engaging with policy makers, as well as being better equipped to formulate and deliver messages for specific audiences formed a crucial element of their professional development, often missing from academic programmes. Alumni were encouraged and supported to write blogs as a route to shaping the narrative about things that really mattered to them. They also found this useful in providing a new way of thinking about academic writing.

*I wrote this first blog... it was the first time I wrote from my heart. English was my second language, before I wrote academic papers... but I never expressed myself. [Alumni 2016]*

These combination of techniques helped alumni be more effective and visible in conferences as well as in their advocacy and thought leadership work, or for PhD applications or defence. Alumni described feeling confident and motivated to write more provocatively whilst being transparent and clear in their messaging. The EV4GH Google Group was cited as invaluable for staying current and informing content for their messaging. Synergies with the International Health Policies Newsletter, BMJ Global Health and Health Systems Global have given alumni opportunities to further build on skills post venture.

### Keys enablers to better communication

- Peer-peer supported learning environment
- Participative learning methods
- Innovative communication formats
- Strengthening skills to frame and pose critical and provocative questions
- Immediate application of learning at an important global health symposium
- Learning to use social media effectively
- Writing collaborative blogs and opinion pieces
- Using current issues in global health as an incubator for new discussions and blogs

### Conclusion

The EV4GH programme of mentoring and peer support amongst a multi-disciplinary, diverse cohort of aligned people, has catalysed alumni to communicate boldly and proactively and successfully use their skills to effectively communicate in the health systems space.

Alumni have almost universally expressed the value of the communication components of the training programme. This includes improving writing skills, particularly plain language writing in the form of blogs and/or opinion pieces, as well as having the confidence and support to formulate and deliver such messages for specific audiences through a variety of different platforms. The ability to communicate differently and effectively to audiences other than to those in their own professional spheres is considered invaluable. The degree to which alumni focussed on developing particular skills after the venture was based on motivation and relevance to their particular circumstances, however, the relationships with the IHP newsletter, BMJ GH and HSG have given alumni opportunities to develop their skills post venture. Expanding these types of strategic partnerships would benefit alumni.

The model of training linked to the HSR symposium allowed alumni to confidently use their newly gained and honed communication skills. This deliberate training effort in innovative communication methods within a supported environment was highly valued. But what sets this apart from other training and makes this programme powerful, is when alumni can easily access a range of different platforms so that their messages and stories reach different audiences. Many training programmes equip people with skills but not the platforms through which to practice their craft. Alumni recognised that the programme went above and beyond to catalyse young voices and facilitate this access. The IHP newsletter provides a strong, informal communications space which encourages debate and BMJ Global Health provides welcome opportunities to write blogs, editorials, commentaries etc. which has helped hone writing skills and amplify EV voices. The combination of formal and informal mentoring and peer support amongst a multi-disciplinary, diverse cohort of aligned people, has catalysed cohorts to communicate boldly and proactively.

Whilst the current platforms provide a very welcome and supportive space for EV voices to be heard, these frequently used spaces are dependent on individuals; Kristof Dekoster (IHP) and Seye Abimbola (BMJ GH) supported by other co-editors and alumni including Steph Topp and Kerry Scott. Therefore it will be important to expand to different platforms and spaces that EVs have already successfully accessed to ensure voices continue to amplify and be heard and to identify other potential mentors. As more EVs emerge and progress along their professional pathways, so does the potential for mentoring support and access to new platforms increase. It would be prudent for EV4GH to regularly reach out to its alumni to assess what additional mentoring support and platforms can be made accessible. Strategic partnerships with other publishing platforms either blogs or academic would be potentially beneficial in widening access to platforms. There is also potential to leverage the EV4GH relationship with HSG to set up a more formalised mentoring scheme/pairing scheme. This will very much depend on strategic priorities set by the governance board.

The programme should take stock of what it has already achieved and what is feasible to deliver and support in a relatively short duration training programme. Providing writing mentoring is a long-term commitment and justifiably has not been attempted since the earlier cohorts. For the majority of alumni, the focus on communicating to different audiences using innovative formats filled a gap in their professional development. For alumni from LMIC institutions and those with English as a second or third language, the support provided through EV4GH is difficult to access elsewhere.

Whilst some alumni would have liked more guidance and encouragement to produce quality written outputs, especially academic articles, the EV4GH space should not divert its focus to this. A plethora of academic writing programmes are easily accessible, and this is not a core aim of EV4GH. However, EV4GH may like to set up a community of practice to support publishing. This is already informally happening.

There is clear evidence that some alumni go on to publish jointly with other EVs in a range of formats, however there is a missed opportunity to write statements, blogs, position papers and think pieces as a unified EV4GH voice. This is discussed later in this report.

### Recommendations

1. Continue to support EVs to use effective and, where appropriate, innovative formats to communicate to non-academic audiences
2. Explore with alumni, HSG (and TWGs), and other strategic partners, what additional mentoring support and/or access to alternative platforms for amplifying young voices
3. Explore options for supporting academic writing via a community of practice combined with mentoring support

### Good practices

1. Facilitating access to the IHP newsletter as a capacity building resource for writing
2. Synergies with IHP, BMJ GH, HSG help alumni to build on skills after the venture.
3. Mixed cohort of academics and activists energises the cohort to communicate boldly in different formats to non-academic audiences
4. Leveraging position of alumni within the network on editorial boards

Perception of the level of engagement of alumni with the network (Google Group, regional hubs, social media, informal connections)

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This section discusses **alumni engagement with the EV4GH network [T05], motivation to engage with the network post venture [A23], meeting needs of alumni and appropriate channels [A25], being able to keep in touch with alumni [A38] and the regional hubs or regionalisation of the network [A46].**

There are currently approximately 250 EV4GH alumni (excluding the 2020 cohort) and 502 members of the Google Group which is a central part of the network. This section focuses on the alumni engagement with the network rather than the wider group which subscribes to the Google Group. Engagement in relation to social media channels (Twitter, Facebook etc...) and the newsletter is discussed in a subsequent section.

In general alumni engagement is quite high. There are strong bonds within cohorts (both alumni and facilitators) with significant interaction amongst some of the cohorts via WhatsApp or between strong friendship groups. These are discussed later in the report in relation to peer support. However, some informants stated that it was still easy to lose touch due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. This was particularly the case if they were not involved in taskforces or board activities or regularly attending HSRS. Some alumni who were active in these areas had formed strong cross-cohort links, but the majority felt that the other alumni were simply people on a list and that more needed to be done to build bridges between cohorts. Whilst alumni informants identified that face-to-face was most effective at building links they acknowledged that it was financially prohibitive. Hence it was suggested that virtual reunions or cross cohort events, either social or formal would be useful in binding together the network and facilitating relationships that might result in collaboration.

*There are ten EVs most of which are from my cohort who are my best friends in the world because of the programme. They are my people. A personal or professional question I reach to them. [Alumni 2014]*

*I think it is hard when you have not met each other, so difficult to create tight bonds when they are people in the ether. [Alumni 2018]*

*I do feel that maybe there could be more effort to bring people together, but I can promise you that academic life is so exhausting that it is difficult to make space and time. [Alumni 2012]*

The cornerstone of the network is currently the Google Group emails. Many of the alumni informants stated that they read the emails every day or every other day – scanning them for relevant information. Whilst a

few informants stated that the volume was excessive the majority were very appreciative of the constant content. Some informants queried whether the communications could be more consolidated, as with other networks as they were not aware of the digest option which can be adjusted in their membership of the Google Group. A very small number admitted that they simply file the emails or send them to an email they do not routinely use, which meant that they often missed content.

The content is largely curated by Kristof Decoster at ITM Antwerp, although alumni also provide content either directly to the group or via Kristof. Alumni informants widely praised the content of the emails keeping them up to date with current thinking, informed about alumni achievements, opportunities for training, scholarships or employment, and news about the network. Content was equally valued by recent or emerged alumni.

Kristof's curation of the list was widely praised and although it was acknowledged that it was largely dependent on one person, many informants felt that this was inevitable and was unlikely to become more distributed in terms of contributors. Whilst there were occasional discussions and debates that happened via the Google Group, it was mostly identified by informants as being primarily an information exchange. Some identified the need for a separate channel that could better accommodate discussion and debate.

Barriers to engagement with the Google Group included language and time pressures. Inability to engage fluently in English was stated to be demotivating. For most alumni interviewed, the Google Group emails were the primary form of communication and sense of connection with the network. As such it was highly valued but there was a sense that the potential of the network was more than information dissemination.

*Reaffirm that the power of Kristof's emails is really great and really useful. I use the literature as teaching resources. [Alumni 2012]*

*The stuff Kristof sends out is very valuable. .... I have an extremely busy job. ... I make use of the resources and stay on top of whatever they send as I know that it is the latest things in the field. [Alumni 2012]*

*We are bombarded by emails from Kristof.. There is a bit too much but there is useful information in there. [Alumni 2014]*

*It is useful but it can be a bit overwhelming to wake up with 30 messages. [But] I do not find a better way to keep up to date. [Alumni 2010]*

*I have tried to start an alumni network and no one had time to send stuff around so it did not work. That is a very powerful role that he plays, although it might seem mundane. [Alumni 2012]*

Facilitating collaboration between alumni was repeatedly highlighted as a potential role for the network. This was in terms of collaborative research projects, collaborative writing, and collaborative advocacy/activism. With the latter role being highlighted more consistently by partner staff and the first two by alumni.

To date collaboration has primarily been organic, with alumni forging their own connections and deciding how to leverage them. Examples of collaboration included finding speakers/panel members for conferences, setting up support groups, writing collaboratively, planning workshops or conferences, national and international research projects. In general, there were few examples given of collaborative research projects.

Barriers to collaboration identified by informants were lack of access to funding, institutional commitments and priorities, not knowing who else in the network had shared interests or was based in particular locations. This latter barrier led to a variety of suggestions from informants including improvements to the online directory of members to enable easier communication between members, more virtual connection opportunities through coffee hours, regional meetings, and having individuals responsible for reaching out to

new members on a regional basis. It was acknowledged that there were difficulties in having a database of members due to European data protection regulations.

Another suggestion was to form issue-based groups based on research or activism-based interests. Or taking this further, as suggested by one informant, to have more structured ways to collaborate on thought leadership perhaps through focusing on one topic area such as decolonisation. The need for a more structured approach was associated with being able to unleash more of the potential of the network. One informant also suggested that the secretariat could assist in helping people develop work once particular ideas were agreed for collaborative work and a few informants felt that the network should apply for grants on behalf of alumni for collaborative work. However, informants also identified that it was the personal relationships (largely cemented through face-to-face interaction) that were fundamental to successful collaboration.

*We even still collaborate. I have had one or two who have contacted me, who want to write or read a piece with them. Very important to my personal development. [Alumni 2018]*

*I think it is personal based on relationships in the same cohort. It is personal one-to-one connections that are fundamental to collaborations that have happened. [Alumni 2016]*

Another area where informants felt there was more potential for the network was in sharing learning and continuous professional development. This was particularly in the context of harnessing the learning from earlier cohorts, although it was pointed out that all cohorts could learn from each other. Informants felt that there was room to use the network more between ventures to share skills and knowledge. Some areas identified by informants were how to navigate their careers, amplifying and raising voice and writing meaningful proposals. Informants also talked about the support they gained from their fellow alumni and the potential of formal mentorship both of which are discussed later in this report.

*I have as much to learn from the incoming cohorts as from my past cohorts. I think that is a good way to strengthen the network. [Alumni 2014]*

Ultimately it was a unanimous view across all type of informants that the potential of the network was not being fully leveraged to have a collective impact on policy and practice or on discourse. The key question was how to mobilise the network to achieve this potential and how to focus given the diverse nature of the group.

*Global problems you can put up very strong movements with the network that can cause change. Not only in one country or one continent but all over the world. How are you able to mobilise that? I think it has been one of the biggest challenges of the network is that the network can network its members very well then it can be a bigger force to be reckoned with. [Alumni 2016]*

*I think it is important and it is in all our interests for it to continue and reinvent itself and be a presence in this community that I value highly. [Partner staff]*

Motivation of alumni to engage with the network varied. Voting turnout was reported to be approximately 50% of the alumni, approximately 20% of alumni participated in the interviews and a similar proportion in the survey. There were some alumni who had no engagement with the network, some were largely passive, and a smaller number were active in various ways, both formal and informal. It is not possible to quantify the proportions who are active at any one time.

The importance of having individuals who were active networkers and connectors within the network was highlighted by a few informants. It was acknowledged that individuals often had many network options to choose from, thus it was inevitable that active engagement would be less than 100%. Barriers to engagement identified by informants were language, family commitments, professional or academic commitments, other

priorities and a lack of comfort interacting with large groups. The lack of opportunities to engage beyond delivering the venture and/or writing was also seen as a barrier to engagement for those not interested in those aspects of the network.

Informants identified that participating in networks was a two-way street; you need to nurture relationships to gain from them. However, it was felt that this was primarily an individual choice. Even where alumni were not active, they still felt connected and part of the network. Those who were more active talked about the importance of a sense of empowerment and leadership they had within that network resulting in a feeling of ownership.

*I consider myself part of the network even though I am not that active. It is an identity. I was part of that and it has marked me in a good way. [Alumni 2014]*

*It will give as long as I nurture it. [Alumni 2016]*

*I can say that I am a part of many networks and for me this is one of the strongest that I feel part of. That could be for a variety of reasons. I feel a sense of empowerment and sense of belonging and leadership. I feel that we are invited to lead if we want and in any way that I want. There is a sense of ownership and you can own it as much as you want. That has been fostered by ITM and the leadership from the start. [Alumni 2014]*

*It is a platform for people to use as they see fit. But it also means that different people engage at different levels and some do not. But it would be too much for the programme to ask them to engage. ...Here is a platform to work with it as you wish. [Alumni 2010]*

However, some informants identified that the network would benefit from a bit more structure through having a clear institutional home and support with focused activity areas.

*We cannot be entirely just about that conference. We are more – but a lot of energy is around the symposia they are recruiting grounds. [Alumni 2010]*

The network already uses a variety of channels namely Google Groups, Facebook, Twitter, EV4GH website, and LinkedIn. The network also has a newsletter. WhatsApp was widely utilised either to organise taskforces or by cohorts for interpersonal communication. It was identified that in assessing current and potential channels it was important to be realistic about what can be done with limited financial and human resources. Alumni interviewed tended to be most active in terms of consuming the Google Group emails, WhatsApp and Twitter. Social media was seen to have opened up new opportunities to keep in contact and highlight achievements but its uptake and level of engagement amongst alumni varied widely.

As already discussed, the main request from alumni regarding the Google Group was in relation to consolidation or option for a digest which some alumni appear to be unaware of. It was also highlighted by a small number of voices that it was 'old school' in terms of modern channels for disseminating information.

WhatsApp was used very actively amongst cohorts but less so in some of the earlier (pre-WhatsApp) cohorts and less successfully for 2020. WhatsApp was used to organise work by some of the taskforces particularly around organising the ventures. It was also being used regionally for example for Latin American based alumni. WhatsApp, however, is not available to be used in China where the preferred platform is WeChat.

Twitter was seen as being a good space and well managed on behalf of the network. There was engagement and it increased visibility for alumni. Not all alumni interviewed were active on Twitter but those that were felt it was a good way to keep in touch with the achievements of alumni.

There is an EV4GH newsletter which has been in operation since 2017/8 and since that date there have been six issues. The newsletter is distributed as a document rather than an e-newsletter through the Google Group and sometimes via Twitter. Whilst there were limited views expressed about the newsletter one informant identified that whilst a lot of work went into producing the newsletter it was not really fulfilling the need to glue together the network and highlight opportunities for engagement (publications and conferences) or reminders of tasks that need doing. It was also seen as being not regular enough and not in a modern, engaging format. Most alumni did not refer to the newsletter in the interviews.

The website (<http://www.ev4gh.net/>) was identified as being incomplete or out of date by a number of informants. In addition, many seemed not to know about the directory of alumni currently on the website. Some alumni felt that the website was primarily for external consumption rather than use by the alumni. It was recommended that there should be an easy way for alumni to update their own information held on the website.

Quite a few alumni who were interviewed were unaware of the Facebook page although this was not highlighted by any alumni as being an important part of their engagement with the network. EV4GH presence on LinkedIn was identified by a very small number of informants as having been tried or being a good potential forum but again most alumni did not discuss LinkedIn as an EV4GH channel.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of additional functionality in terms of platforms/channels already provided by EV4GH and response can be seen Figure 5.

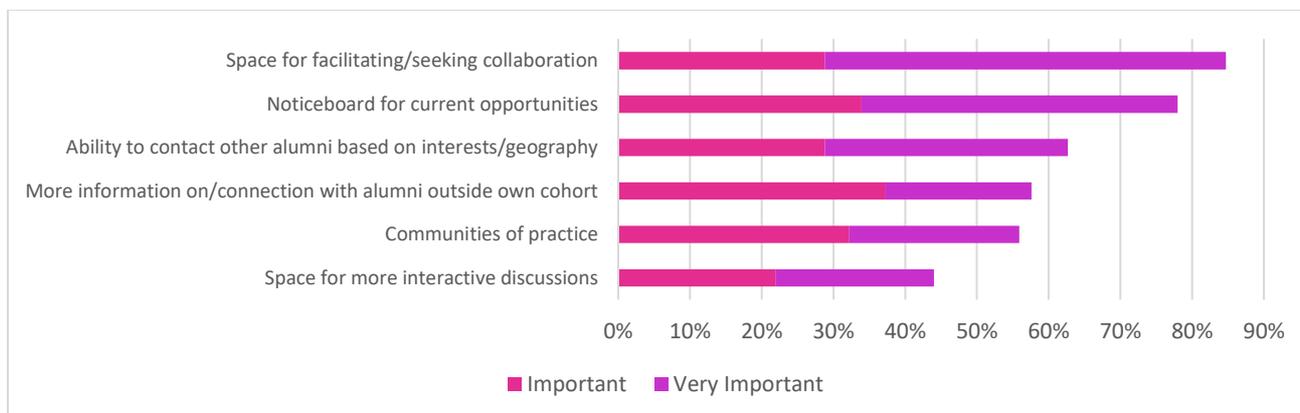


Figure 6 Percentage of survey respondents who rated additional functionality for alumni platforms as either important or very important (n=59)

Despite having a channel to promote discussion and engagement often came up in the interviews, it was the lowest of the priorities in the survey. However, space for facilitating and seeking collaboration was a repeated theme in the interviews and came up as the highest priority in the survey. The connected functionality of being able to contact other alumni and more information on alumni outside own cohort also rated highly. The issue of having a noticeboard for current opportunities relates to the difficulty some alumni had in keeping track of the information provided in the Google Group emails which currently is the primary route to broadcast opportunities to the whole network.

The secretariat is the keeper of the list of alumni contact details. They estimate that there are up to date emails for all but about 5-7% of the current list. However, when alumni were interviewed, it was clear that there was also the possibility for emails to go to accounts which still existed but were no longer being used, which would not result in an email return showing a no longer valid address. So, this number may be slightly higher. One of the ITM Antwerp/EV4GH internships had sent out Google forms to individuals to get up to date details for the website and this process was estimated to be done every 2-3 years. However, it was identified that requests such as these are often 'lost' in the Google Group emails – along with other potentially important network related requests. Emails were also identified as being 'checked' prior to elections. Two interviewees

identified that they were no longer receiving the Google Group emails as they had moved employment multiple times but did not know who to contact to provide new contact details.

*I have no knowledge of what is going on. I think having dropped off the email I do not know what is going on and that is the only vital link and without that you do not know what is happening. [Alumni 2014]*

EV4GH uses the WHO regions as an organising principle on the Board and there has been effort made to catalyse regional hubs as well. Alumni recognised the potential of a regional approach to help broaden reach of the programme and perhaps catalyse more collaborative action. Additional potential benefits identified by informants were to facilitate recruitment, sharing skills on a regional basis, producing thought pieces regionally, and being able to meet face to face at less cost. There were also alumni who did not think regionalisation was necessarily beneficial to the network as enabling diverse global networks between emerging voices was one of its strengths. Another identified risk was that too much focus on regional activity would dilute the networks potential to support global activity. They felt that regionalisation should not be a main focus of the network. Some informants identified that more thinking was needed about the pros and cons of regionalisation for the network.

*Maybe the answer to a problem in the region was already addressed somewhere else in the world. We need to encourage that type of global networking and not just be isolated. If you have only in your region you will always be in the same place. [Alumni 2012]*

*We are global health, we are interested in the world, but also interested in improving home. [Alumni 2014]*

Regardless of its strategic importance, to date there has been limited success in creating active regional networks within EV4GH. There were multiple points of view on the barriers to regionalisation within the network. One issue was the number of active members in each of the regions. It was highlighted that number of members were very uneven across the regions, but actually if a region was to move to action it was the number of active members that was important. Another barrier identified was the scale and diversity of the regions themselves. Also the fact that alumni were in the same region, they often did not know each other and hence were not building on existing relationships. The lack of action or activities to organise around in terms of coming together regionally was identified as a hurdle. The question of which region alumni should or could belong to was also raised in relation to diaspora and HIC alumni whose work was predominantly in other continents. Alumni from HIC also felt that being in groups solely with other HIC alumni was not in the spirit of the decolonisation agenda. There were also logistical barriers in there being no platforms to easily identify and communicate with everyone in a particular region.

Suggestions made by informants to overcome some of these difficulties included linking regional hubs to institutions with a focus on recruitment and/or cascaded training, linking to HSG's regionalisation programme, requesting each region to come up with an action plan and providing some seed funding, assigning new members a regional buddy. A few informants identified that to really move the regionalisation agenda forward it would require potentially significant funding.

*Could regional programmes offer potential to young researchers in developing countries where they might not have the resources or awareness of how to access training. Even simple training in producing an academic poster. You are not taught how to write.... Funding and commitment would be needed. [Alumni 2012]*

The degree to which there were active regional communities within EV4GH varied significantly. In West Africa the EV4GH network merged with another network to form the West Africa Network of Emerging Leaders (WANEL) in advancing the translation of health policy and system evidence into practice. The network's success was associated with having a specific institutional hub and areas of specific focus according to informants. The network operates through technical working groups and organises around regional

conferences. There is not an equivalent in East Africa and officially there is a whole Africa chapter. However, whilst attempts were made to catalyse action across Africa a few years ago, the organiser could not sustain their own engagement and it was reported that there was little activity outside WANEL. Language barriers between francophone and anglophone Africa were also identified as problematic.

In Latin America alumni are using the upcoming fact that the next HSRS will be in Bogota to catalyse a plan of action around publication and preparing for the conference. Previous actions in the region include seeking regional scholarships and using a WhatsApp group to share information and stimulate discussion and debate. However, there are currently only about 13-15 members. Officially there is a group which covers Latin, Central and North America but this was identified as being too broad geographically.

As individual countries with a significant number of members both India and China had separately managed to create some opportunities to meet up. One in China for 5-6 members and a number of workshops and regional event in India. Individuals in China had collaborated to write papers together. However, the wider regional networks that the two countries are part of (Western Pacific and South-East Asian) were identified as being too broad and both had the potential to be dominated by either China or India simply due to the greater number of alumni from each of those countries. Ultimately there was the impression that the WHO regional structure did not fit organically in a useful way within the EV4GH network.

*If there was a regional hub I would tap into that to introduce myself and my research project in their area and I am looking for a partner. But I think there is also value of knowing people in your own time zone. That is advantageous when you are in a random time zone ,being able to talk to each other in real time. [Alumni 2014]*

*It will probably come but there probably needs to be some catalyst. [Alumni 2012]*

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## Discussion

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One of the fundamental difficulties of networks is getting the balance right between having structure and a more organic development by its members. Another is ensuring that there is a shared perspective amongst network members on its purpose. The need for structure should ideally be driven by the networks purpose. At the moment there is significant agreement that the network aspect of EV4GH has much greater potential than is being met but there is less agreement on what that potential is and how it should be met. This is reflected in the earlier discussions about the strategic direction of EV4GH. The need for a strategic review and a set of decisions made about priorities is fundamental in relation to the EV4GH network. Hence, the discussion and recommendations below reflect a number of options not all of which should necessarily be pursued but instead be selected from on the basis of the strategic direction EV4GH decides to take.

### **How effective is it as a network (Google Group, formal and informal links between alumni)?**

The Google Group is extraordinarily important in providing continuing value to the alumni but also as the primary root of communication between alumni and the official network. As there are some wider recommendations made regarding reviewing some of the information technology platforms that are used by EV4GH it would make sense for the Google Group channel to be reviewed as part of this process although it may be that simply highlighting to alumni the option of the digest version would improve perceptions of useability. In addition, it would be worth reviewing whether the Google Group should be supplemented by other channels designed for discussion and debate, e.g. Discord platform. However, the evaluators would treat the adoption of any new channels with caution as often new platforms are not widely taken up within existing networks. Trialling with new cohorts and then widening out if it proves useful could be an option. The curated content provided by Kristof is a massive asset to the network, but consideration should be made about the long-term sustainability of this highly valued service. This is discussed later in the report.

Because of the volume of emails within the Google Group there is a risk that emails regarding volunteering opportunities and Board processes and news are lost amongst the flow of information. It is recommended that there is a specific mailing list with a different originating email/source for alumni that is specifically for internal communication. This would mitigate against EV4GH requests and news being lost amongst the flow of health systems and policy information and opportunities. There should be some clear instructions on the website on how alumni can advise on changes to email address – or more ideally that they can log on and update their own information.

There are extremely strong informal links between alumni which can be nurtured and leveraged as and if required. These are anchored in relationships where alumni have worked or learned together either as participants or facilitators or through volunteering for the network in other roles. Many of these relationships play out over WhatsApp and email and are invisible to the rest of the network. Most cohorts create a WhatsApp group and many of these with a few exceptions remain active channels of exchange between alumni. These WhatsApp groups could be utilised as cascade broadcast and discussion channels for EV4GH. This could be done through having representatives in each WhatsApp group responsible for passing information from and to the centre via a separate WhatsApp group with the secretariat responsible for collating information from cohorts and also broadcasting discussions/debates/calls to action as directed by the appropriate taskforce(s). However, it is not advised that this is used as the main route for all communication to alumni from the Board/Secretariat rather that it could fill the gap of where discussion and debate happens in a more coordinated way across the network without having to adopt another channel.

The move to regional structures within the network has only had limited success. For the evaluators one of the key problems with this approach is that the regional structure is not a natural fit within the EV4GH members. Alumni do not know each other and so are having to try and create relationships with people that they do not (yet) feel a connection with. The regions are too big to realistically allow regular face to face meetings to enable that feeling of getting to know each other and connection. It is unlikely that people will invest time in creating new relationships purely because it seems like a good idea when they only have limited time to invest in the relationships that they already value. However, there are strategic benefits to thinking about how EV4GH can cascade its successful mode to more people and a regional approach here does make sense. Hence, we recommend the following in relation to regionalisation:

1. The focus of the regionalisation strategy of EV4GH should be in relation to cascading the training approach on a regional basis through linking to the HSG regionalisation programme (as it is already doing) and together with HSG seek funding to enable similar training initiatives linked to regional HSG events. Resourcing will be key to meeting aspirations.
2. Within EV4GH, regional networks should be allowed to emerge organically and not be 'forced'. These may happen like WANEL through merging with other networks or through a shared agenda for action and/or when HSRS is located in the region eg Latin America around the Bogota Conference. The advocacy/activism themes recommended below may stimulate more regional groups to form.
3. Regional representation on the Board could continue as it is valued by the membership, however, Board applicants should focus on how they add value to the governance and taskforces and not their plans for regional development of the network.
4. Cohorts are a more natural organising principle within the network than regions. The bonds between alumni from the same cohort are already strong and people already want to work together.
5. Recruitment and fundraising were other areas raised as benefiting from a regional structure but the regions are too large for small groups to be able to undertake a meaningful strategy across the whole region. Thus, it is probably better to look for champions in specific countries and with links to regional institutions to undertake this type of work under the guidance of the fundraising taskforce rather than regional groups of alumni spread across many countries.

The Twitter handle and its use was praised by alumni and fulfils a role in highlighting and amplifying alumni achievements.

The newsletter, Facebook page, LinkedIn presence and website would all benefit from a review. This should be in relation to the needs of alumni or external audiences with clarity about whether the channel is primarily externally or internally facing. For instance, the newsletter could either highlight alumni and EV4GH achievements for external consumption or be a more regular summary of actions that need doing within the initiative, updates on funding and other internal information that help facilitate action amongst the network but are of little interest externally. As discussed later in the report this information is currently lacking for alumni. Where channels are little used, little investment should be put into their upkeep. For externally facing communication, messages should be targeted to a funding audience rather than to potential applicants at the present time as the ventures are already oversubscribed.

### **How many EV alumni are truly active members of the EV community?**

It is quite difficult to assess whether members are truly active within the community particularly because there are limited ways for alumni to visibly demonstrate their 'activeness' beyond volunteering. To some extent the turnout for voting in Board elections might be the best proxy indicator that there is for members feeling that they are part of the network. It is inevitable that there will be some very active members of the network, some who are intermittently active as their other priorities allow, some who are passive consumers within the network and some who drop away. The evaluators would not recommend focusing time and resources from the network on trying to reactivate alumni who are not active or primarily passive as often it was due to a strategic choice on their part of where they want or are able to invest their time.

### **Can we better facilitate collaboration, capacity strengthening for alumni or coaching by alumni? How can we keep supporting EV after the intense venture phase?**

There was significant support for the network having a role in facilitating collaboration between alumni. Undertaking joint action whether through writing, projects or advocacy/activism was seen as key to delivering the unmet potential of the network. However, there is a tension between the way in which these types of collaborations tend to be organic, fuelled by shared interests and a willingness of individuals to work together coming together with the right opportunity and what the role of a network can be in facilitating such convergences of possibilities. To some extent the expectations of some of the alumni may need to be managed in this respect as it is unrealistic to expect the Board and Secretariat to undertake the role of deciding on areas of focus, applying for funding and then mobilising groups of alumni to deliver collaborative projects. The initiation and drive for collaboration will always need to come from members and not from the centre. However, the evaluators have a number of recommendations that could assist in facilitating collaboration and the sharing of learning within the network.

#### **1. Quarterly or Six-monthly virtual meetings**

Having regular virtual meetings for alumni to attend will provide some structure and focus particularly in non-venture years. We recommend that these meetings have a number of streams of content that will contribute to cross-cohort interaction, learning and collaboration. Firstly, in the period of time after each venture the new alumni should be introduced to the rest of the group. New alumni could be encouraged to produce a short video highlighting their experience, journey to date and their aspirations for the future. This video could also be made available on the website for people who do not attend the particular meeting where it is shown. A second stream might be to share career hacks or advice particularly from the earlier alumni. This is an area where informants felt there was a great deal of potential within the network to share information on how you navigate career pathways, exert influence, and raise your own visibility. A third stream would link directly to the areas for collaborative action outlined below and could be a mix of debates, discussion, expert talks and updates on actions taken.

#### **2. Focal areas for thought leadership and collaborative action**

One of the difficulties in EV4GH collaborating on thought leadership or collaborative action is the diverse interests and points of view across the network. Agreeing where to focus could in and of itself be a draining and difficult process. The evaluators suggest that EV4GH should have 1-2 core areas of focus that might sustain over a 7-10 years period coupled with an area of focus which is decided by each cohort as an area of focus for the next two years culminating in the next HSRS. The benefit of having the new cohort decide the new area of focus every two years is that it continues to be an area of choice of emerging researchers/activists rather than the whole network which will increasingly include emerged researchers/activists. In addition, it will be a much easier process for a group of 25-50 people to agree a topic whilst together physically than to canvas the whole network. A facilitated process for decision making should be agreed in order for the selection of the focal area. By also having some areas that are core focus areas EV4GH can build its reputation for thought leadership in some specific cross cutting areas. Examples of such themes might be the decolonisation of global health or policies and processes to facilitate career pathways for early career researchers. Alumni can then be invited to get involved in any of these groups. Each group should be tasked with coming up with an action plan on a biannual basis with targets for outputs and in particular inputs into the next HSRS. These groups will facilitate collaboration across cohorts and deepen the links in the network as well as providing tangible outputs from the network. It will provide useful proxy indicators for 'activeness'.

### **3. Facilitating contact between alumni**

There is currently a directory of alumni on the website which is not up to date. As part of a review of the website it is recommended that this aspect of the website is upgraded. There are cheap solutions to having member directories on websites for example using free plugins in WordPress. The member directory could be behind a login and members asked to accept a data use agreement for sharing amongst other alumni. There are safe ways in which forms can be used to contact other members without disclosing their email addresses directly. In addition, these types of directories can be updatable by members rather than having a separate Google Form for updates that then have to be updated manually on a separate system. These records could also link to e-newsletter functionality that could be used as the separate channel for Board/Secretariat/internal communication separate from the Google Group. Whilst reviewing the website, Google Group and newsletter functionalities it would also make sense to review whether or not there would be an easy way to combine the broadcast of opportunities with their collation of the website as a form of opportunity noticeboard in alignment with alumni responses to the survey.

#### **Recommendations**

1. EV4GH should select 1-2 core focal areas to develop thought leadership, a collective voice and collaborative action
2. Engage new cohorts to select one biennial topic for collaborative action
3. Establish quarterly webinars to promote cross cohort interaction, career hacks or advice, skills sharing and collaborative action
4. View the cohort rather than regional structure as more organic organising unit for collaboration
5. Look at the option of an opportunities noticeboard
6. Use HSG regionalisation as a route to work regionally not creating separate structures
7. Create a directory where alumni can contact each other and update their own details
8. Separate out mailings that are internal to EV4GH from the Google Group
9. Review existing and new potential channels in relation to either internal or external communication needs

#### **Good practices**

1. Well curated flow of information valued by alumni
2. Use of twitter handle to amplify individual EV4GH alumni

## Perception of whether there is sufficient reinvestment by alumni; enablers and barriers to reinvestment

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This subsection of the report responds to **[T06] ‘Sustained engagement and reinvestment by alumni and partners in the EV4GH initiative (task forces, governance, facilitation of the learning programme)’** and as consequence that there is **sufficient human capital to drive the initiative forward [A26]**.

EV4GH benefits from sufficient volunteerism to keep delivering the biennial venture. However, those alumni that do volunteer often taken on multiple roles and more developmental tasks and/or between venture work was reported as not being adequately resourced. Volunteers are active in almost all aspects of the delivery of the initiative – sitting on governance and operational structures, mentoring, designing and planning ventures and contributing their time and ideas to making the initiative more successful. Alumni also actively contribute to both the EV and IHP newsletter and on occasion have come together to advocate on particular issues.

One respondent, however, felt that the volunteering was limited to a few alumni who created the veneer of high engagement. From their perspective, there seemed to be a lot of engagement, but from a relatively small number of alumni covering multiple roles in EV4GH. This perception is indirectly reinforced by some respondents being concerned about the potential for burnout amongst highly engaged alumni. Generally, the programme is considered to have high levels of engagement compared to other programmes of a similar nature. EV4GH is still heavily reliant on volunteers and a broader involvement of alumni and higher levels of volunteerism would be welcomed by those currently volunteering.

Alumni who volunteer indicate that they are driven by wanting to give back to a programme that has contributed significantly to their personal and professional development. They recognised that their experience depended on volunteer facilitators and wanted to ensure others received the same benefits. The opportunity to learn through volunteering was also stated as a motivator. Generally, it was felt that the motivation to volunteer was because of the strong sense of family and belonging that EV4GH had engendered amongst alumni but there were still some material barriers that needed to be considered.

Informants also stated that they gained benefits from volunteering. These include both material benefits – spends or honoraria or material support for internet connectivity – but also for less tangible benefits like making connections, networking and prestige. It was felt that in order to promote volunteering, it is important that the benefits of volunteering opportunities be clearly spelled out along with expected commitments in various roles and processes.

There was a definite sense that less active alumni wanted to be involved, but that their academic, professional and personal responsibilities were a barrier to participation. Several respondents noted that completing their PhDs was a priority for them and that the time needed to complete their dissertations, as well as to maintain a fulltime professional job meant that they had less time to give to EV4GH than they would have liked. A second and gendered limitation that several women alumni commented on, is that starting families dramatically impacted on their ability to give back.

Other barriers to participation included: that there were a finite volunteering roles available and these were perceived to be well subscribed; that the language of engagement, primarily English, made it difficult for non-English first language speakers; and, that the volunteering opportunities were not well described and so it was difficult for alumni to assess their own appropriateness for the roles. A small set of respondents indicated that they had offered assistance, but that they had not received any feedback from the initiative. Of particular importance to many respondents affected by professional and family demands is the need to have the option of light engagement during periods of high personal and professional commitment.

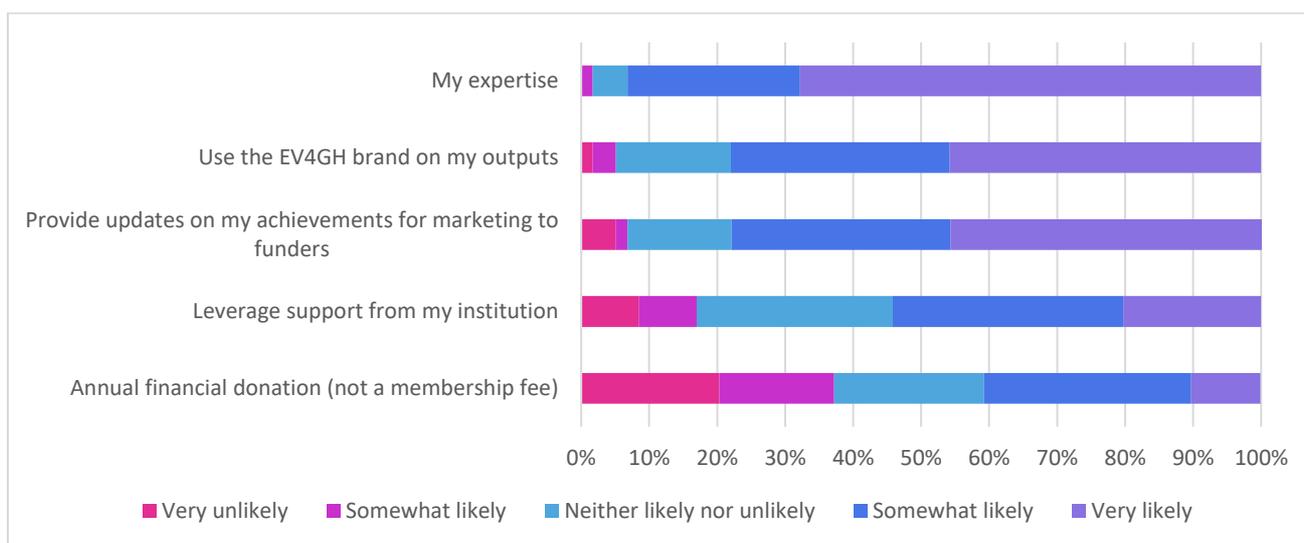
Respondents felt that volunteerism could be further encouraged through: spelling out the volunteering opportunities more clearly; by making tasks smaller and more manageable to accommodate those with finite amounts of time to give; and creating a specific hub for volunteering opportunities. Respondents also spoke about incentives – material support to allow those who needed additional resources to volunteer. Giving recognition was also considered to be an incentive and a few respondents proposed that EV4GH explore the possibility of creating annual alumni acknowledgements and awards. One relatively extreme ‘incentive’ that was proposed was to make volunteering a mandatory obligation for network membership and continued engagement with EV4GH. Other than the mandatory volunteering suggestion, the survey results confirmed the package of incentives that participants and alumni considered to be important. Respondent to the survey rated the importance of the following incentives for volunteering:

**Table 4 Volunteer incentives preferred by alumni to increase participation in EV4GH activities (n=59)**

Small honorarium/expenses for delivery of major volunteer activities	37.30%
Awards programme for services to the network	44.10%
Recognition for volunteering in newsletter or website	27.10%

In addition, respondents proposed that EV4GH consider the following volunteering incentives: monetary compensation for work done; providing certificates of recognition; exposure to international/national conferences; further networking or capacity building opportunities and, tenure system/stronger secretariat. While these are not absolutely clear, financial incentives and the formal recognition of volunteer contributions are definitely considered to be important element in the volunteering mix.

When asked what additional contributions alumni were willing to make to EV4GH the following feedback was received (see Figure 6)



**Figure 7 Likelihood of alumni to provide particular support to EV4GH (n=59)**

The results above indicate alumni are very willing to volunteer and would also be keen to promote the EV4GH brand but are less inclined to make a financial contributions towards the initiative.

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## Discussion

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While the level of volunteering has enabled the venture to be delivered to date, there are real concerns that a few people may be carrying too much of the burden for the venture and the network. While the fall-off in engagement over time is expected and a common feature of programmes of this nature, it must be said that the long-term commitment of the alumni from the early cohorts is exceptional. This it seems, is largely due to

the sense of having been the recipient of something important that alumni then want to pay back. Alumni also expressed a very clear sense of the contribution that the training programme and network makes to their own professional development. Perhaps, in order to capitalise on the initial energy and commitment of young EVs, the initiative needs to provide a clearer induction and to supplement this by outlining very specific opportunities to contribute to the development of the network – perhaps at the close of each venture.

The EV initiative and network is maturing, both in terms of its offering, but also in that alumni are moving beyond their initial ‘emerging’ status, taking up more influential roles and therefore potentially having significantly more to offer the network. In order to realise this potential, it will be important that EV4GH become clearer about its strategic direction and how emerged alumni can and/or should contribute towards that. Additionally, the maturing of the alumni may allow for other forms of contribution that were not possible as early career professionals for example to contribute to strategic thinking and relationship building, make direct financial contributions or to act as ambassadors and promoters of the network and initiative. The corollary of this though is that more ‘mature’ EV’s may derive less value from volunteering their time to EV4GH and so new incentives may also need to be considered.

Another area of consideration is to find the balance between accountability and the quality and timeliness of volunteer outputs. While incentives (financial and other) go some way to address this, the cost of incentives should be carefully considered and managed. Accountability could be further enhanced through a clear set of expectations and deliverables for those engaged in project work. Taskforce terms of reference should be specific, describe clear outputs and timelines and include a clear point of accountability to which the task groups will provide progress reports. Also important, will be to manage the need for the effective functioning of the venture and network while maintaining a commitment to experimentation and innovation.

There is a sense the alumni are not always aware of all of the volunteering opportunities that are available or what is being done by volunteers at any particular time. It would be useful to provide regular updates to the alumni network and to make specific calls for volunteers as and when the needs arise. It is however important that volunteers be engaged to undertake meaningful work and not simply be engaged to complete mundane work. Where possible assignments should be broken down to the task level so that volunteers who can only make short time commitments can also contribute.

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop clear terms of reference for volunteers that specify the expected outputs of the assignments as well as the reporting and accountability processes that will govern volunteers’ work.
2. Consider a limited incentive scheme within the limits of available resources accompanied by a clear policy to ensure equitable implementation
3. Ensure that there is communication and transparency about gaps and the need for volunteers as well as the numbers of volunteers.
4. Expand the number of volunteering options by developing small task-based opportunities.

### **Good practices**

1. Giving opportunities for alumni to both strategically and operationally drive the initiative forward
2. Providing capacity development opportunities through volunteering
3. Being cognisant of the need to cover costs for volunteers in early stages in their careers and particularly from the global south

## Perception of the effectiveness of the mentorship and support provided by peers, facilitators and within the network

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This section explores the **peer learning, mentorship, and support [T07]** and the degree to which **participants are motivated to share learning and support [A27]**.

The approach to mentoring has changed through the years of the initiative in terms of having structured mentoring relationships that continue after the venture. This more structured approach, with a focus on academic writing, was a feature of the early years of the initiative; in latter years mentoring has mainly been during the venture rather than afterwards although participants have found mentors during their participation and maintained these relationships but this has been an organic process. Some of the reasons given for not having structured mentoring post-venture were the difficulty in matching participants with appropriate experts to allow joint publication, personality mismatches between mentor and mentee, and not all participants having a motivation to produce academic outputs. Notwithstanding this there was a lot of support amongst the informants who were early alumni for a structured approach to mentoring and some of those relationships had resulted in specific opportunities through becoming PhD advisors for example.

During the current delivery design of the venture mentoring happens in a more organic way. Participants are mentored in groups with a shared theme in their presentation groups. But additionally, mentors and mentees find each other based on shared interests or geography. Some alumni stated that this more organic approach was probably optimal as there is only so much that these types of relationships can be 'engineered', even if there was funding available. Mentors were found both within the external experts but also the alumni facilitators. Some individuals held particularly important roles in terms of writing mentorship within the wider network namely Krisof Decoster and Seye Abimbola. Many alumni informants talked about the mentorship they had received from these individuals both in terms of encouraging them to write and providing them with feedback on their writing. Individuals who were successful in obtaining the ITM Antwerp internship position talked about this providing them with a significant opportunity in writing mentorship.

For alumni who become facilitators being able to provide mentorship was seen as a learning opportunity but also something that required them to build their own self-confidence. One of the alumni recommended that there should be skill sharing sessions from more experienced facilitators to new facilitators on the tips and tricks of mentoring. In some institutions there are previous generations of alumni who provide mentoring to new alumni.

*We had a fantastic mentor in our group. I think she may become the DG of WHO! Many others truly global leaders. Inspiring to see them face to face and have access to them. That was fantastic. To become that role is quite daunting as you never really feel that you are the mentor. It is about finding your own self esteem.... It is an emotional understanding of being a mentee and then growing up to be a mentor. [Alumni 2016]*

Peer learning and peer support were very strongly praised as an essential and life changing element of the programme. The opportunity of learning from each other was seen as being underpinned by being at a similar stage in careers, diversity of backgrounds and diversity of technical expertise. Bonding and relationship building was seen as a vital part of the experience. Peer support was important in creating a safe space for participants to build their skills and was highlighted as particularly important for participants who were either introverted, had low confidence or were doing things for the first time. Honest peer feedback during presentation preparation was highly appreciated by informants. The experience of debating, discussing and spending free time together cemented strong relationships amongst some of the participants. The debates and discussions were described as 'rich'.

*I was able to step into HSR having the feeling that I had friends and had been there for two weeks and that was very important to me. [Alumni 2012]*

The finding of individuals and a community of people with shared values was variously described as a 'turning point', 'finding family' and 'what I was missing'. For individuals who felt academically and politically isolated this was particularly important for them. These strong bonds often last well beyond the venture with fellow alumni sharing learning and providing mutual support for many years. The strongest bonds and sharing between members of the network are between those who have been on the same venture either as participants or facilitators. However, working together through governance, regional work or other collaborative work was also an opportunity to form bonds. Many informants talked about reaching out to their cohort with questions, requests or for advice. Later cohorts were most likely to have a WhatsApp group to facilitate this contact. Whilst most informants had strong links with a small group of alumni, there were a small minority who had not maintained contact within or outside their own cohort. This was seen as inevitable to some extent as it was down to individuals to nurture relationships and if they already had support, motivation and intellectual stimulation elsewhere then they may not choose to invest the time.

*When you are part of the EV you feel there is a society out there that you can run to - to ask a question.... I think this has been very helpful. [Alumni 2016]*

*Learning process has never stopped. EV never ceases to amaze me. Opportunities of growth and optimism through the members. Highlight of my life professionally and personally. [Alumni 2016]*

Participants draw inspiration for seeing successful previous alumni, who were often described as 'stars'. Seeing successful alumni contributed towards their own confidence and motivated them to strive to achieve meaningful things. They valued the opportunity to talk to people who had already travelled similar roads to where they wanted to be.

The sharing of perspectives and contexts amongst participants was described as 'eye opening' by some informants. For many it was their first exposure to other global health professionals from particular continents eg between Latin American participants and African participants. Informants talked about the power of discussing similar problems from a variety of perspective and with a multiplicity of potential or tested solutions. It opened potential for both south-south learning and south-north learning. For some understanding the different constraints and opportunities within health systems across the world was a fundamental learning point.

*This possibility of talking about specific topics in global health with people who are not professors, who do not represent an authority, facilitates so much learning and motivates you to voluntarily work on these topics. [Alumni 2020]*

*You should not have the hubris to say we cannot learn from the global south ... I have that perspective because the universe aligned to bring me here partly through EV. [Alumni 2014 based in HIC]*

Recommendations from informants to improve mentorship and peer learning included: having more opportunities for peer learning within the face to face and/or virtual programme; seeking funding to enable more structured mentorship programmes with both mentors and mentees able to sign up on a website showing their interests and expertise; more external mentors for academic or journalistic writing; utilising alumni for structured mentoring; mentoring to become effective voices in global health, and getting the balance between facilitators and participants right.

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## Discussion

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The sense of community and the deep bonds amongst the participants and alumni of EV4GH is impressively strong. Each cohort with its facilitators operates as a de facto community of practice that many alumni draw

on throughout their subsequent careers. Wider communities are created through other parts of the EV4GH network such as becoming a member of the board or taskforces. This bringing together of diverse groups with a shared passion which enables these close bonds is a crucial part of the programme. It has already been recommended in the networking section to use the strength of these communities as an organising unit rather than trying to artificially impose a regional structure.

There were voices in favour of and voices against having a more structured approach to mentorship. There are reasons why structured approaches to mentorship are useful, for instance to ensure that more introverted participants get access to opportunities and encouraging participants to think about concrete goals. However, most mentor and mentee relationships require a level of willingness on each side and a connection between parties which is hard to replicate in a virtual match making process. Often the most successful mentoring relationships occur organically. In addition, managing a structured programme, follow up on activities and time commitments for mentors may require proper resourcing. One suggestion was to just have a database where alumni could indicate if they were willing to be a mentor but in the evaluators opinion, this kind of halfway house of a structured programme would probably create more problems than it would solve. There are other organisations in the global health space that offer mentorship programmes. Hence a strategic decision would need to be made as to whether developing structured mentoring is a priority for EV4GH. Even without a structured mentoring programme there are some perhaps 'quick wins' that EV4GH could consider some of which were suggested by the informants and some of which have already been recommended within this report:

1. More time for peer sharing and learning in the programme (virtual or face-to-face).
2. Buddy system post venture where a peer or facilitator follows up with the participants after six months to discuss progress towards their personal goals.
3. Widening the platforms which encourage contribution from EVs and hence provide some informal writing mentorship.
4. Regular webinars to include a career hacks or advice section where emerged alumni share tips and tricks from their careers to date.
5. Creating opportunities to get to know alumni across cohorts through the newsletter and webinars
6. Innovating to develop a sense of community through online spaces

#### **Recommendations**

1. Decide within strategic review whether or not to have more formal mentorship scheme or a less formal buddy scheme to follow up on agreed goals
2. Identify spaces for sharing, discussion and community creation as part of a review of online innovation
3. Increase the time for peer sharing and learning in the programme (virtual or face to face)
4. Agree the optimal balance between facilitators and participants

#### **Good practices**

1. A diversity of participants encouraged to discuss and debate creates rich peer learning environment
2. Encouraging peer feedback
3. Intensity of experience leads to lasting relationships which are leveraged throughout careers

#### Perception of the improvement of skills gained through participation in the network

This section explores the degree to which there is evidence of the intermediate outcomes **[IC1] Improved knowledge of global health issues and application of equity frameworks, [IC2] Improved critical thinking, analysis, problem solving skills, and [IC3] Improved advocacy and communication skills.**

In relation to [IC1] Improved knowledge of global health issues and application of equity frameworks informants identified four key areas; a more ethical approach to research, awareness of the importance of context, strengthened commitment to pro-equity approaches and a continued update in hot topics in global

health through the EV4GH venture and the Google Group emails. The more ethical approach to research included partnering with the MoH and not undertaking 'extractive' research. One informant also spoke about becoming more reflective and self-accountable for the issue of funds. Whilst the hot topics covered in the venture might become less relevant or out of date, the emails provided through the Google Group kept information up to date and were associated with keeping the 'critical lens sharp'. The importance of context was brought home to participants by the perspectives of a diverse group of participants.

*We share similar issues but the ways of addressing the issues are very context specific. Knowing it, experiencing it, feeling it from real people's experience is different from knowing it in an abstract way. [Alumni 2010]*

In relation to [IC2] improved critical thinking, analysis, problem solving skills informants stated that the EV4GH "nurtured this culture of critical thinking" through having challenging spaces, debates, and pushing people to think. Debates were identified as useful by many as they were not a format often used in academic contexts and helped participants sharpen their ability to listen and make cogent arguments in response. Informants talked about being able to see things in a different way, solving problems in an innovative and exciting way and seeing different ways of addressing issues. They were encouraged to think more creatively and be bold.

*I am not fearless, but I can lean on the feeling that I can think outside the box and be bold in my thinking. That is a big confidence booster. [Alumni 2016]*

Perhaps the most profound change in terms of skills and attitude change cited by most informants was [IC3] improved advocacy and communication skills. Many informants identified both a changed understanding in the need for better communication of research results, how to use language matched to different audiences and an increase in skills across a range of communication channels and techniques. Whilst there was a focus on communication techniques in international conferences such as oral and poster presentations, fishbowls, panel discussions, round tables, world cafes it was also the ways of engaging with policy makers and use of role plays that were valued by participants. These techniques were seen as not only making alumni more effective and visible in terms of participation in conferences but also more effective in their professional roles, advocacy/thought leadership work or for PhD applications or defence (discussed in more detail later in report). For some alumni EV4GH also represented their initiation into the world of social media with many using twitter for the first time. Many of the communication techniques alumni were exposed to were new to them; however, this was less so for participants who were drawn from the activism track. Whilst there is less emphasis than at the beginning of EV4GH on academic writing many alumni cited the EV4GH experience as developing their motivation and skills to write blogs (as discussed earlier). Informants talked about learning how to be provocative but also transparent and clear in their messaging. One alumnus highlighted that whilst you cannot gain all the skills you might need in such a short training intervention it gave a set of values that motivated individuals to gain skills in their own time.

*[Communication] is not my task I thought before - I just have to do research. But this training told me I have to take more responsibility to let people know about my research and link it to practice. It motivates us to do that. [Alumni 2016]*

*I think realising that science and research are so much more about communication than I was taught in academics was a big paradigm shift for me. [Alumni 2014]*

One issue raised by a small number of informants was the quality of the research that was being presented was sometimes below par and there was little opportunity to focus on this given the diversity of the participants and the focus of the training.

The mix of capacity strengthening techniques used by EV4GH during the venture are perceived by the alumni to, in some cases, have had a profound effect on their attitudes and, in all cases, to have built skills that will aid them through their subsequent careers. The focus on soft skills that are often not developed well within academic programmes was highly valued and aligns with best practices in strengthening the capacity of researchers. The content aligns with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework<sup>6</sup> which is based on empirical data to identify the characteristics of excellent researchers. In particular, the skills built relate to the sections of the framework relating to cognitive abilities, creativity, engagement and impact, communication and dissemination, and working with others. Having an equity lens, critical perspectives, and appreciation for the importance of context were seen by some as having a fundamental effect on attitudes to and design of future research and/or projects. The lasting effects and synergies from these skills are discussed later in the report. The degree to which alumni focussed on developing particular skills after the venture was based on motivation and relevance to their particular circumstances, however, the relationships with the IHP newsletter, BMJ GH and HSG have given alumni opportunities to develop their skills post venture. Expanding these types of strategic partnerships would benefit alumni.

The decision to focus less on academic writing from the initial ventures makes sense in terms of the level of commitment from both mentor and mentee needed to develop academic writing. Arguably, this mentoring relationship should be part of an academic relationship rather than through an initiative such as EV4GH.

### Recommendations

1. Look for opportunities to expand strategic partnerships that give alumni opportunities to further develop their skills.

### Good practices

1. Focus on global health issues, equity frameworks, creativity and problem solving and communication skills
2. Exposure to a range of communication and facilitation techniques
3. Using current issues in global health to improve ability to construct and make arguments
4. Synergies with IHP, BMJ GH, HSG help alumni to build on skills after the venture.

## Perception of the degree to which participation in EV4GH has strengthened international networks

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This section of the evaluation relates to the ToC intermediate outcome **[IC4] Strengthened international networks**. Many informants identified that they felt that participation in EV4GH had meaningfully strengthened their international networks. This was through the connection they felt with other alumni and facilitators from EV4GH, exposure to experts in the field through the training and pre-conference and increased exposure and confidence to network during HSRS and subsequent international conferences.

The immersive experience of participating in EV4GH forms strong bonds between participants and facilitators some of which were described as lifelong friendships, being part of a team, or family. Some alumni identified that although the participants were diverse, they shared a commitment to social justice and to improving health outcomes and that this helped developed these strong bonds. Like many networking opportunities the degree to which alumni actively participated in nurturing these connections varied. These relationships are leveraged by alumni for discussion, advice, support, and collaboration. These links were particularly important

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/rdf-related/researcher-development-framework-rdf-vitae.pdf/view>

for individuals who felt isolated due to the small number of people working in their field within their institutions (mainly in LMICs). Alumni also used their networks to facilitate contacts, logistics and contextual understanding when working in new countries. Whilst there was widespread feeling that the potential for collaboration was unmet within the network there were examples of alumni leveraging their networks to convene panel discussions or to collaborate on projects. Some alumni have also formed small communities of practice utilising EV4GH for example in relation to COVID-19 response.

*I had a network of support and inspiration to draw on. [Alumni 2010]*

*I think that my global network went from 0 to 100 from EV... Also, what I have done with this network I could talk for a whole day. [Alumni 2014]*

There was evidence that this bonding experience was considerably weaker for the 2020 venture which so far has been completely virtual. Alumni from previous ventures also identified that it was challenging to meet up and exchange with their fellow alumni outside the programme. Conferences were identified as opportunities to meet up and collaborate particularly on blogs, however, these opportunities were not accessible to all alumni and were dependent on professional roles and institutions.

Some alumni had gained access to mentors or supervisors through exposure to role models and experts at EV4GH. Some alumni also formed or strengthened strong collaborations with ITM Antwerp and/or the co-host. A number of the alumni interviewed (particularly from the early cohorts) already had connections to ITM Antwerp but these were strengthened through the EV4GH experience. Alumni of EV4GH talked of gaining scholarships for training programmes, participating in the internship programme, having PhD supervisors and in some cases collaborative projects with ITM Antwerp. One alumna interviewed also had a collaborative project with the co-host of their venture. Particularly strong in terms of strengthening international networks is the relationship of alumni with HSG with many becoming central to a number of the TWG of HSG and participation on the board.

*I had only read names in papers but then during the EV I could talk to them and see their face and that was inspiring. I had read their work. ... You draw a lot of inspiration when you talk to people. [Alumni 2020]*

Skills in networking gained through EV4GH and put into practice immediately at HSRS were also identified as enabling them to develop their professional networks further.

*For me it is the soft skill of networking and being known in the broader community that has been contributing to my professional growth. [Alumni 2012]*

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## Discussion

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International collaborations have been identified as having the effect of “increasing clinical and research capacity in global south contexts and afford scientists in resource-poorer countries an opportunity to participate in or lead innovative scientific research and to publish”<sup>7</sup>. Access to international networks is, hence, particularly important for early career researchers particularly in LMICs. EV4GH gives participants the possibility to leap ahead through creating a strong set of interpersonal relationships amongst alumni, facilitators and partner institutions as well as facilitating networking within HSRS and HSG. However, it will remain up to individual participants to what extent they utilise and leverage this opportunity.

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<sup>7</sup> Faure MC, Munung NS, Ntusi NAB, Pratt B, de Vries J. Mapping experiences and perspectives of equity in international health collaborations: a scoping review. *Int J Equity Health*. 2021;20(1):28. Published 2021 Jan 9. doi:10.1186/s12939-020-01350-w

Bonds are strongest between individuals who have been together at face-to-face ventures and there is a challenge in how to broaden opportunities to network and bond in purely online environments (such as the 2020 venture) or between cohorts. Earlier recommendations relating to networking may help address this.

It is clear that many EV4GH alumni have taken up opportunities with HSG, ITM Antwerp, BMJ Global Health and a lesser extent other partners providing benefits to both them and the institutions. Other strategic partnerships could be developed to highlight and facilitate additional opportunities for internships, scholarships, funding and/or professional roles. Often there are insider tips which are important in understanding how these types of opportunities can be accessed and so simply asking these types of partners to share information on opportunities and application processes can help alumni to widen their institutional collaborations and networks.

The international networks that EV4GH alumni create through their participation in the venture and subsequent nurturing of their relationships are a form of social capital that they bring to their professional roles. Arguably these networks make them more attractive to potential employers and more effective in their roles. These connections are particularly important to institutions that are early in the development of health policy and systems research as a discipline.

### Recommendations

1. Create strategic partnerships with key global health institutions where EV4GH can benefit from professional opportunities (scholarships, internships, funding)

### Good practices

1. Bringing people together from diverse backgrounds and disciplines with common aspirations
2. Exposure to experts in the field
3. Exposure to HSG and the possibility of having a wider role within the group

Perception of the degree to which alumni have increased visibility in the wider health systems community as a result of participation

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This section relates to whether alumni have **increased visibility in wider health systems community [IC5]** and whether or not that is **particularly for underrepresented groups (geographical, gender, language, socio-economic status) [A35]**. It also explores the extent to which the **EV4GH brand is recognised within the HSG community and used by alumni [A31]**. This data is mainly derived from alumni only.

Informants felt that being a TWG of HSG has given them a lot of legitimacy within the HSG community. The platform has enabled voices from the global south to be heard and enabled voices from what are considered 'smart new generations' to be heard. The status of EV4GH was associated with giving greater visibility through the brand and also through inclusion in particular sessions and the opening/closing ceremony at HSRS. The commitment to having young voices prominently in conference at HSRS was contrasted with other conference spaces which tended to be dominated by senior experts leaving little space for innovation or fun. However, it was stated clearly by informants that greater visibility was only really applicable within the HSG/HSRS space and was not evident within other conference spaces.

*But EV allows me to have a voice in some of these places that matter. EV gives me a taller hill to stand on and my shout will be more visible than from a valley somewhere. [Alumni 2010]*

Being able to more easily access opportunities to blog or publish particularly through the IHP newsletter and BMJ GH was highlighted as a means through which EV4GH potentially increased visibility. Being a facilitator at EV4GH was also a way of increasing visibility within HSG and within EV4GH itself. Working in an institution

that became a co-host was also associated with increased visibility. The EV4GH Twitter account was also highlighted as raising the profile of alumni through retweeting, resulting in an increased alumni followers thereby motivating a large number of alumni to engage in social media. Alumni that have taken up roles in HSG largely as a result of their exposure to the opportunities through EV4GH also identified that as having increased their visibility.

*I learned how to tweet and did my first tweet at Vancouver. I was able to interact, do blogs and people said they read them. I learned about my digital footprint and how to enhance it. During the trainings I facilitated in Liverpool and speaking about an issue gets you photographed and people notice you. Alumni 2016*

Some alumni stated that they did not promote their own achievements much within EV4GH and therefore did not benefit much from opportunities to amplify their visibility. This was usually associated by informants with a personal discomfort with self-promotion. Some alumni interviewed were not active on social media and thus less visible. In one case an informant stated that they felt that the network was not interested in their particular work and hence they had disengaged.

Some informants felt discomfort about EV4GH alumni being too visible and being perceived to be elitist.

*I found it difficult as EV you had a status and certain opportunities and your voice was elevated. But discomfort I want to be part of it but then not in an elitist group. [Alumni 2018]*

The EV4GH brand was identified as being very useful at HSRS but of limited value beyond that space as it was not so well known. Although one informant identified that they had been told by a recruiter at UNICEF that they were well disposed to recruit EV4GH alumni as they valued the skillset they brought with them. Some informants felt that more could be made of the brand on Twitter, and the PowerPoint presentations and posters that alumni produced and that it would be useful to have a branding pack that they could access. Branding and marketing of EV4GH by EVs is inconsistent, with some alumni choosing to promote the EV4GH brand on their communications, whilst others did not.

## Output 2

### Think Piece: A Spectrum of Activism

#### The EV4GH Way

A key principle of EV4GH is to be 'constructively disruptive' in influencing the global health discourse in pursuit of creating systemic, impactful change. Notions of disruption, bring to mind loud, public actions designed to create discomfort and thereby force reflection and change, a classic interpretation of public campaigning and advocacy. But, as many successful advocates will tell you, this is not the only route to change. The successful advocate uses other levers and a broader set of actions to create shifts in policy and practice.

#### Broader Actions to Influence Change

- Robust, well-articulated research
- Translations of research into policy briefs
- Direct lobbying
- Shadow policy development
- Relationship management
- Third party influencing

Whilst much emphasis is placed on the achievements of the 'more vocal and visible' alumni, the EV4GH initiative finds itself well represented in almost all of these spheres. EV4GH has been very successful encouraging participants to find and amplify their voices and are using a range of entry points and strategies.

#### Making their voices heard

- Publishing readers
- Involvement in WHO guideline development
- Working closely with government and private providers to improve health care
- Writing policy briefs to national government
- Working directly on government policy
- Publishing books
- Running innovative research projects to address health system problems
- Active membership: eg Lancet Commission
- Using research and evaluations to push the critical agenda encapsulated within EV4GH

In the more public domains, and outside of the conference space, EVs have been prominent in the global health debate on decolonisation, having initiated the #DeconizeGobalHealth Twitter campaign which rose to prominence and seeded a string of decolonisation seminars across the world. This is expected to have a global effect which may impact on the allocation of research funding and prioritisation of issues. EVs have also been at the forefront of conversations around planetary health.

#### Celebrating the 'Quieter' Advocates

A challenge for the initiative is ensuring that those alumni who prefer to work behind the scenes are also made visible and celebrated as contributors to achieving the goals of the initiative. EV4GH needs to reinforce the message that alumni are on different trajectories and should not be compared. It is clear that EV4GH core values are being taken up and given expression in all aspects of alumni work. EVs repeatedly reiterated a commitment to quality research, produced with integrity and shared in a manner that creates new knowledge with the potential for change.

#### Towards a Collective Position

Whilst EVs have prominence in the global health discourse, this is largely related to their activism at HSG's global HSR Symposium. Some alumni are pushing for both a broadening of the activism at other conference spaces, but also for building a more collective advocacy base. Whether or not a collective position is possible depends on the ability of the network to debate, take a clear policy position, develop and coordinate programmes of action and leverage the collective without jeopardising the EV4GH brand should they decide to address more controversial issues.

#### Tapping Network Potential for Greater Effect

What is clear is that the range of actions that EVs have engaged in to create change at a global, regional and national level is having an effect - their role in driving discourse around decolonisation or in the small policy and practice changes that they are able to promote at municipal government level. It is also clear that the network has unrealised potential to expand the scale of its influencing work, through a focus on creating change in agreed priority areas and to use the weight of the network and the prominence of its members to drive EV4GH led campaigns and of others' which align with EV4GH values.

#### The EV4GH Dichotomy

Critical to the future of the network as an influencer will be to constantly battle with the dichotomy of living up to their reputation as disruptor – visible, confrontational challenger of the status quo - and the more subtle role of influencing policy and practice change through indirect strategies and person to person engagement. Whatever mode individual alumni choose, EV4GH is undoubtedly a vibrant space that is enabling activism now and has the potential to do more should it choose to.

Participants benefit from increased visibility at HSRS and within HSG. They then can choose whether or not to take up opportunities to amplify their visibility through publishing platforms and social media. They also gain skills through their participation in the programme that they can use to develop or increase their visibility. But whether alumni leverage these opportunities to make themselves visible depends partly on personal motivation and comfort in promoting their own visibility and also their professional roles and aspirations. There are lots of factors beyond EV4GH that determine whether or not individual alumni will rise to prominence. There are 'super star' alumni who are very visible but there are also alumni doing important work behind the scenes. Alumni are on different timelines and trajectories in developing their own voice.

Whilst EV4GH should look for additional opportunities to promote alumni through social media platforms that are important in the global health space or through strategic relationships with other blogging or publishing platforms, ultimately it is up to alumni to decide on how visible they want to be and to then find their own voice and the right platforms to speak through.

One of the important balancing acts for EV4GH is to encourage participants to find their voice and amplify it whilst not making those alumni who prefer to work behind the scenes to feel a sense of inadequacy in comparison. The evaluators interviewed some alumni who expressed a feeling of being less because they were not as visible. This issue is discussed further in the Think Piece: A Spectrum of Activism (Output 2) page 62.

It was hard to judge from the data available whether or not visibility increased specifically for all underrepresented groups, however, informants identified that there was good representation from the global south and good gender balance. However, language barriers have already been raised in relation to engagement with the training, conference and network. It would, therefore, be a reasonable assumption that these barriers would potentially reduce visibility within the network for non-fluent English speakers. In addition, the issue of socio-economic status was raised as an area where EV4GH could do more to promote diversity in selection – again the assumption being that if there are fewer participants from low socio-economic status backgrounds then it is also unlikely that EV4GH will be successful in promoting their wider visibility for this category of participant.

In terms of branding, if there is an increase in collaborative/collective work, then this should be EV4GH branded. Beyond this, it is an individual choice as to how much EVs wish to promote the brand in their own communications. However, if it is not already available, it makes sense to have a social media/branding pack including logos, suggested acknowledgements and PowerPoint templates that alumni can access if they wish.

### **Recommendations**

1. Develop strategic relationships with other platforms (blogs, academic journals) facilitate access for EV4GH alumni
2. Ensure all collective outputs are clearly branded with EV4GH and provide an electronic social media/branding pack for use by individual alumni

### **Good practices**

1. Using twitter to retweet and promote alumni achievements
2. Providing platforms within HSRS for EV4GH participants including opening/closing ceremony
3. Providing access to publishing platforms eg IHP newsletter, BMJ GH

This section reflects on the intermediate outcome **[IC6] Strengthened alumni-led and southern-led initiative** and draws on the reflection from a mix of respondents: alumni, ITM Antwerp and secretariat staff. Alumni responding to this section occupied formal roles within the delivery structures of the EV4GH governance and task forces.

There was overwhelming agreement that both the training programme and network are led/directed by southern voices. They have a strong role in the governance structure and are active in both the delivery of the training and in the planning and organising in the run up to the ventures. The alumni network is diverse and, because the work of EV4GH is largely alumni-driven, it is directly influenced by the needs and experience of 'southern' practitioners. Respondents noted the importance of the secretariat being housed in a southern institution and the deliberate representation of the regions on the board as important markers of the intent of the initiative to be southern led being expressed in practice.

One aspect of diversity as previously discussed was the low representation of countries from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Bloc whose health systems status mirrors that of LMICs. It was also noted that there was relatively little representation from marginalised populations in HIC including indigenous peoples whose health outcomes and challenges also mirrored those of their LMIC counterparts. There are also some concerns that diversity should also be viewed from the perspective of the institutions from which participants are drawn or based as alumni. Some respondents noted that there is still a bias towards those based in northern institutions even though they might be from LMICs.

*EV4GH governance is still dominated by people who are either located in the north or who have northern institution[al] links. [Alumni 2016]*

Beyond the question of northern institutions being able to support alumni participation in EV4GH activities by making time and institutional resources available in support of these roles, consideration also had to be given to who could or did not volunteer for EV4GH because of their own personal resource limitations. To some extent it was felt that, volunteering for EV4GH is possible only because of a level of privilege that northern based or those associated with more well-resourced institutions enjoy.

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## Discussion

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There is no doubt that the initiative is southern, and alumni led and the key role played by the EV Secretariat (housed by IPH Bangalore) over the last six years, is discussed later in this report. However, some thought needs to be given to the complexity of what 'southern' means in practice. Is there a need to expand connection to more southern institutions? Do the former soviet bloc countries fall within this broad definition of southern? How does the intention to be inclusive of marginal voices translate in relation to high income countries with large disparities/inequalities in health provision and outcomes? These conversations will need to be integrated into the strategy development and clear decisions taken as to how these questions will be addressed in the short, medium, and long term.

### Recommendations

1. Reflect on widening representation to include other marginalised geographies and groups and ensuring representation of southern based alumni as well as diaspora

### Good practices

1. Commitment to and operationalisation of being southern-led
2. Commitment to and operationalisation of being alumni led

This section relates to the inputs into the initiative including finances, staff and volunteers, capacities and its structures including the secretariat, governance, partnerships, and taskforces.

### Perception of whether the initiative is sufficiently resourced

This section explores whether there **are sufficient funds to resource the initiative [A03] sufficient resources for the initiative (including meeting increasing demands for places on the biennial venture) [A06], whether the network aspects (in particular between ventures) is sufficiently resourced [A24] and if an effective fundraising strategy is in place, including targeting a diversity of funding [A39].**

Unfortunately, we were unable to interview one of the key board member in relation to fundraising and, in general, alumni had low levels of knowledge in relation to the funding and fundraising for the initiative. Staff at ITM Antwerp had varying degrees of knowledge of the Belgium, Directorate-General Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) funding. While there was also some fundraising experience in the sample, this was usually in the research grants space. Very few respondents had any institutional/donor or programme fundraising experience and the data in this section should be seen as being tentative.

Funding for the initiative is via funding received from DGD via ITM Antwerp which directly and indirectly fund elements of EV4GH – secretariat, scholarships and ITM Antwerp staff time (for example for managing the Google Group and delivering the venture). It must however be noted that the funding for the secretariat is minimal. Increasing this part of the grant would definitely improve the work. Staff time at ITM Antwerp is not directly funded by the EV4GH element of the grant but is provided for through in kind contributions from the institution and subsidised by the IHP grant. HSG provides additional support to EV4GH TWG to the value of EUR 10,000 every two years. The HSG funding is mainly used for scholarships. The initiative has been successful in getting funding for scholarships from a variety of other sources although these are not guaranteed and have to be sought for each venture. There has also previously been support from The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (WHO Alliance for HPSR), although this funding is reportedly no longer available.

The general sense is that EV4GH has been just able to raise sufficient funding to meet its current ambition but that this is not sufficient to expand scholarship numbers or do more between the ventures. This is largely due to the large amount of volunteer and in-kind time that is given by alumni, ITM Antwerp staff and co-hosts. There are also concerns about the sustainability of funding and overreliance on one funder – DGD. While a few new funders have come aboard e.g. USAID, these have been one off donations and staff involved in fundraising over the years expressed the need for diversification of the funding base by at least three to four new funders who would be able provide sustained and predictable funding to support the initiative. In addition, respondents felt that the Alliance for HPSR funding, though not a large amount, was strategic, and the initiative would do well to bring similar contributions online.

Overall, the initiative is thought to provide good value for money, receiving significant subsidies through for instance, the waiver of HSG fees for venture participants; through in-kind contributions from co-hosts, ITM Antwerp and the secretariat institution; and the high levels of volunteerism that the initiative has enjoyed.

The overall impression from informants was that the EV4GH budget was tight. Funding for the secretariat has been sufficient for them to support the venture but not to take on any other responsibilities. The number of scholarships has been reducing rather than increasing over time. Ambitions to develop the network aspects of the initiative or support regionalisation have to date been pursued without funding. However, one ITM Antwerp staff member indicated that there could be some flexibility to expand the budget in the upcoming

reapplication for funding to DGD if there was sufficient justification made as to why it was needed. It was not clear from the discussion with other staff as to exactly how much room there was to make adjustments.

It was felt by some that securing more sponsorship funding would go a long way to alleviating some of the stress, while others worried that increased numbers would compromise quality of the ventures and could damage the 'spirit' of EV4GH. The 'spirit' and identity of EV4GH was seen as an asset that has to be carefully maintained. The capacity of the volunteer facilitators to cope with increased numbers was also highlighted as a risk should the idea to pursue significant increases in numbers of scholarships.

While one secretariat team member felt the function was sufficiently funded, they felt that some allocation flexibility needed to be considered. There was a sense that the funding envelop was quite rigid and could be administered in a more flexible manner. Others felt that the secretariat was under funded and that to be able to support more than just venture delivery additional resources were required. Informants also raised the issue of there being capacity gaps in EV4GH such as fundraising and operational management. If these posts were funded in the secretariat, it would allow the board to take on a more creative and strategic role rather than being overly involved at an operational level. There was however an indication that there is openness to review the 'shape' of the funding in the next DGD round to make it more appropriate for the initiative aims.

There is a concern that there is currently no funding available for activity between the ventures or to invest in the network aspects of EV4GH. Other areas that were noted as needing increased investment included: support to the secretariat; increasing the number of participants in the ventures; support for regional gatherings (linked to HSG regionalisation strategy); developing collaborative outputs relating to thematic areas of interest to alumni; and increasing alumni interaction between ventures for example, by hosting webinars between ventures to consolidate learning; and, providing mentorship for career development.

There is no real fundraising strategy in place and the initiative tends to work from event to event. Several respondents indicated that the ventures were the focus of fundraising efforts – with a focus on scholarships but little beyond that. And, as result of this, network activities received little attention. There was an expressed need to be more strategic about fundraising and to link it more effectively to the broader strategic aims of the initiative. One respondent noted that to some extent raising funds for individual scholarships is easier for both illustrative and accounting purposes. They also indicated that in order to fundraise more effectively, the initiative will need to 'itemise' its work more beyond the ventures only. They felt that EV4GH will need to develop detailed project/programme stream budgets in a format that funders can understand and then to fundraise for those specifically. Informants also identified that funding requests to potential funders could be significantly improved with some professional input.

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## Discussion

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### **Is there a correct balance in terms of distribution of both HR and financial resources between the year of a venture and the year in between? How does the current distribution impact follow up on alumni?**

It is clear that there is not a correct balance of both HR and financial resources between the year of the venture and the year in between; but that is largely because the venture has been the primary focus of the initiative. Now that there is increased focus on the network, this will need to shift. Thus EV4GH will need to develop a clear strategy and on the basis of this strategy reorganise the initiative activities and structure and develop a programme and products that go beyond the ventures. There is also a need to clearly define the value proposition for a range of donor targets.

An important question that will need to be resolved when considering resource allocations is the issue of demand versus supply – look for increased funding but dilute impact, or accept that EV4GH is never going to meet supply and that it works best as a small programme. An expansion of the activity set will bring an

increased administrative and management burden that will also need to be resourced. An improved costing model for scholarships that shows the behaviour of different costs with increased numbers would be beneficial. Some costs may stay constant for a certain increase in numbers but then have a significant increase once a tipping point is crossed and these need to be modelled.

The network components of the initiative, between ventures, is not really resourced and as a consequence very little happens during this period other than the taskforces preparing for the next venture. Once EV4GH defines prioritised activities between ventures, then fundraising could be addressed for these elements of the programme. Alternatively, some of the costs could be added to the scholarship costs - forming a follow-on programme which is funded through the scholarships. The board may also wish to consider requesting fundraising support from ITM Antwerp central staff. Many of the points made here relate to the sustainability of the initiative and recommendations are made in that later section of this report.

### Recommendations

1. Investigate the possibilities of requesting increased funding to support expansion plans from the next round of DGD funding.

### Perception of whether or not the governance and taskforce structure is fit for purpose

This section explores whether: **the governance of the initiative is enabled to be, and is alumni-led with leadership from the global south [A09], the governance structure is fit for purpose[A10], and the governance structure and secretariat work efficiently and effectively together [A11].**

From a governance leadership perspective, respondents generally felt that the Board was sufficiently diverse and with strong representation from the global south.

*Now I am seeing people from the south are more engaged in the governance processes but also the people from the south are allowing people not from their network to be part of that which was not before. It could be led from the south, but I have seen them doing the same and being in the same impenetrable bubble which works for a small interest [group] but now I do not see that as much. [ITM Antwerp staff/ex-staff]*

There was consensus that the Board was working well- that the people filling the roles were doing a good job. Generally, it was felt that the people who apply want to commit and give back, were aware of time pressures that the roles required and made the time to make sure the initiative functioned well. One of the alumni felt that an important role that the governance members fulfilled was to motivate people from their home regions – that visible representation was important.

*Everyone is trying to do the best they can with the resources that they have. They have been very committed to making the network work to the degree they can. [Board member, Alumni]*

A founder member noted that the governance structure has evolved to a point none of the original board members or founders are on the board and that this was a positive thing. It was also noted that the Board had improved their procedures and functioning over time, citing the transitional period for the outgoing chairperson to facilitate handover to an incoming chairperson as good practice

Alumni were happy with the Board selection process – that the voting in of Board members was a good thing. They also expressed appreciation for the regularity and clarity of feedback from the Board. One informant held the positive opinion that Board members were now strong enough as people and leaders, not to be swayed by what funders or partners such as ITM Antwerp or HSG said. Although one partner staff member raised the concern that EV4GH was still not independent from ITM Antwerp and noted that while being a TWG has helped foster some independence, there was still work to be done to make the governance structure truly

independent. Generally, the sense is the Board does its job well despite difficult circumstances, particularly in relation to workload. Board members were viewed as committed and represented the network well with processes that were transparent and accountable.

One respondent raised the issue of Board members geographical locations, noting that several members, although southern in nationality, were located in northern institutions or prestigious southern institutions. However, one Board member stated that being based in a well-resourced institution meant that Board members were better able to fulfil their functions because their institutions encouraged their participation in the initiative, subsidised their time, and provided resources to support their engagement.

A key concern raised was that the Board was too operational and did not have enough time to focus on the strategic and initiative development components of its role and that there was still some role confusion that needed to be clarified. It was noted that Board roles were voluntary in nature, that people were juggling multiple responsibilities (compounded by the Covid-19 crisis) and there was an insufficient documentation to support new Board members. It was accepted that people were performing well enough despite the significant pressures they faced in their personal and professional lives. One concern raised was that many Board members did not have governance experience and that they should be supported to develop the skills and capacities to fulfil this function more effectively. Concerns were raised as to whether Board transitions were managed efficiently and if institutional memory was retained. This was particularly in the recent context of a high level of turnover of board members due to a combination of resignations and end of term elections.

Taskforces were considered an important part of the delivery structure – taking on some of the implementation responsibility of the Board. Some respondents noted variable levels of participation within the taskforces – that some were in effect just a couple of active members. The work of the taskforces was very venture focused, doing little work outside of that. There was a feeling that those taskforces with a more strategic focus (communications and fundraising) struggled more than others to deliver on the projects. One task force member noted that the groups needed more people to participate in them – that there was a relatively small number of people sitting on multiple groups which impacted on their focus and the quality of their engagement. They expressed a need to reach out to and encourage others with specific skillsets to participate in the taskforces.

Generally, it was felt that rules, roles and responsibilities for both the Board roles and taskforces were not well documented and that there was a need for stronger systematisation and development of procedures. Counterpointing this though, is a recognition that the position for EV4GH in relation to ITM Antwerp, HSG and the secretariat institutional governance structures are unclear therefore making this a complex task. Many of the respondent noted that time is needed to commit to the role – which is not always possible as people have other jobs, and that while the secretariat plays a support role, it can only do so much.

*If you have to do that amongst many other responsibilities and you do not have sufficient time then regardless of your motivation if you cannot have enough time and sufficient resources to organise it this is a limitation to govern the whole thing [ITM Antwerp Staff/ex staff]*

One informant recommended better clarity on what is expected, especially for taskforces, but also for the Board; that leadership handover processes are developed and documented; that there should be a standardisation of procedures to avoid misinterpretation including clarity on structure, roles and responsibilities and decision-making mandates; and that non-alumni also be included in the Board to expand the network and bring in fresh perspectives.

There was an opinion that regionalisation may assist Board diversity although there is some ambivalence about whether this is necessary other than as a mechanism to support local collaboration. Linked to this idea would be to select Board members for their capacity to give time, share the experience that they have, bring

alternative perspectives, skills advice and fresh insights to the initiative. These members would not necessarily need to have voting rights.

*The reason being is that because we are involved in the network, the thinking is always in that network from teaching to governance and TWG. We may not think outside of that black box. Maybe having diversity of alumni and non-alumni might be good even as advisors not necessarily voting rights. [Board member]*

Another recommendation was to consider a smaller less geographically representative Board, supported by regional representatives who focus on network building while the Board focusses on strategic issues like sustainability and positioning.

A suggestion was made to develop a stronger, more explicit terms of reference for the Board and to communicate these better. It was also suggested that the timing of the Board selection be shifted to well before the conference as the pre-conference period is very busy and potential members may not feel able to apply because of their involvement in preconference activities. It was also recommended that Board members should have collaborative working and networking experience and should be able to articulate a clear vision for what they want to achieve for the network as a whole and sell themselves to the EV4GH community.

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## Discussion

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There is a need to separate the governance and operational functions more clearly to improve the focus and efficiency of the initiative. While there is a need to define roles more clearly and to develop better systems and procedures, these should be light enough to support the initiative without stifling creativity and innovation. To some extent, strategic clarity will enable the design of an appropriate governance structure, more clearly, define core organisational development needs and provide a clear point of accountability for the various structures that enable the initiative. There is still some role confusion especially as the rules for being an HSG TWG are not been followed to the letter for example in relation to term limits. Also, clarity on the role of members of the Board who are not members of HSG and so cannot vote. There is a need to build clear rules to support the functioning of the Board.

If EV4GH remains within the broader HSG programme framework then the current governance structure is suitable – if not, then a major overhaul will be required to accommodate fiduciary responsibility and other mandates required of an independent organisation. Any change to a stronger governance function will require that roles and responsibilities be clearly defined, and decision making/delegation frameworks will be critical for ensuring accountability.

Strategically focused taskforces need a clear set of outcomes, mandate and a way to connect into decision making processes to make them more effective and accountable. The groups have skills and motivation, but need a plan, focus and deadlines and clarity about how their outputs will be used. These should be captured in clearer terms of reference which also specify how decisions will be made to advance the work of the groups as well as who is mandated to decide on what. Undertaking the strategic review and having a clearer vision of what is delivered between the ventures will help taskforces to become more focussed with a clear annual plan.

**Is the current governance model the most appropriate for the initiative? Are the structures of the governance board and secretariat and its mode of interaction most appropriate?**

As the initiative is designed, the model is appropriate – changes may need to be made based on the outcomes of strategy development process. There does need to be a rebalancing between operational and strategic roles in the board and taskforces. Some consideration should be given to a smaller (maximum five member) governance team selected for their skills and experience, supported by a secretariat with increased capacity

(project management, communications and fundraising roles) and an advisory committee (regional representatives from the network). This would ensure a focus on skills needed for governance whilst retaining the regional representation that is valued by members.

The relationship between the Board and secretariat is positive and well-functioning. There are only minor issues around procedures, but generally the two functions operate with a solutions-oriented approach. The Board and secretariat operate with a sufficient arm's length and there is a clear delineation between decision-making and implementation. However, because of human resource constraints, Board members are having to take on more operational functions, for example in the design and facilitation of the venture.

#### Recommendations

1. Restructure the board and taskforces to create more delineation between operational and strategic roles
2. Develop clearer procedures for the Board.
3. Refocus the taskforces once the strategic review has taken place and require them to have an annual plan with clear targets/outputs
4. Consider changing to a smaller strategic board with a focus on skills supported by a regionally representative advisory committee

#### Good practices

1. Board members elected not appointed
2. Regular feedback and communication from the Board
3. Board is southern-led
4. Board is alumni-led

#### Perception of whether the secretariat function meets the needs of EV4GH

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This section looks at whether there is **[A04] an effective and efficient secretariat function with sufficient resources [A05]**

Respondents agreed that between ventures the workloads were okay, but there was insufficient capacity during preparation for the venture and that additional capacity had been and would continue to be needed during their period. The secretariat, currently housed at IPH Bangalore, is staffed by young researchers with a good knowledge of the field who use their tenure as learning opportunity. During peak periods secretariat accesses volunteer time from other staff or students.

An ITM Antwerp staff member suggested the secretariat needs an increased budget so it can hire more people. A specific need identified was to have a full-time person to take care of logistics. While another respondent suggested that the secretariat should be staffed by three people in the following roles: communications, fundraising, management of the network. Budget stability was also considered to be an area that could be improved. Currently the budget is being adjusted every two years which created some uncertainty. It was felt that secretariat stability and expansion would have a beneficial effect on the overall functioning of EV4GH as it would enable some of the governance functions to work better.

Due to changes in legislation on receipt of foreign funding the secretariat function needs to move from its current home. One ITM Antwerp staff member felt that more thought needs to go into the secretariat function and placement. They cited that while the experience of Bangalore has been positive the issue of receipt of funds highlighted the need to be deliberate in the selection of secretariat partner. When reconsidering the secretariat function, a few respondents noted that changes to the function had to be made carefully to avoid disruption. One informant cautioned that it was important that the secretariat does not become too powerful and had to remain in service of the board.

No major challenges were identified in relation to the operations of the secretariat other than conflicting operating procedures/policies between ITM Antwerp and the host institution which take time to be resolved. It was also identified that whilst the Board and secretariat had a good working relationship that all decisions had to go through the Board and sometimes this created delays. Despite this, working relationships had remained positive, but the issue did point to a need to clarify decision making processes.

ITM Antwerp staff highlighted the transfer of the secretariat as a significant issue - for continuity and the retention of organisational memory. A few options for the new hosting organisation are available and the decision will need to be made relatively soon to affect the transfer. One respondent suggested the EV4GH look to the example presented by HSG, which also rotated their secretariat and was supported by a strong governance model and society structure to enable its programme. One possibility was to merge with the HSG secretariat function although this would not necessarily cover all the functions needed by the network.

There were differing views on the importance of the secretariat being housed in the global south, although predominantly it was seen as a good thing. One informant suggested a multilocational secretariat and that the defining criteria for selection be based on staff willingness and capability to be hosted by their own institution. The challenge to this proposition was centralised financial management and administrative support.

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## Discussion

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Without a doubt the EV4GH Secretariat was highly appreciated for the core role they have played in effectively supporting the initiative over the last six years. It is important to make sure the secretariat works as efficiently as possible to allow the various components of E4VGH to continue to do what they do best. While it is working well now, with only a few pressures, the transfer of the secretariat is imminent and unless managed carefully, could result in challenges, both administratively and in setting up of the new relationship.

There is too little data on potential options to be able to identify which option is best for the transfer of the secretariat. However, there are a few critical elements that will need to be taken into consideration: the secretariat will need to be housed in an institution that has strong links to EV4GH, preferably beyond individuals; the institution should have the ability to manage and monitor funds; the secretariat will need access to established and well managed administrative systems and infrastructure; and, the institution will need to be able to operate in a transparent and accessible manner.

The transfer of the secretariat decision has highlighted some difficulties in terms of who feels ownership of the whole initiative. While ITM Antwerp has the funding relationship, the Board has the responsibility for strategic oversight, and it was difficult to assess from the interviews who felt ownership of the issue and was driving it forward. There was a sense that everyone thought that somebody else would ultimately sort it out.

Strong operational support to the initiative is important and while the secretariat is doing that well, it may be doing so at a high cost to staff. The secretariat is under resourced during peak periods, and this takes a high toll on staff and volunteers. The uneven distribution of the workload through the project cycle will need to be remedied through more effective planning and resourcing and the development of a more strategic approach to the network management. Decision-making authority also need to be clarified. The secretariat will need enough autonomy so that routine and minor emergent issues can be dealt with swiftly without referring decisions to the Board. A clear delegations/decision making framework would support this.

Providing dedicated support in the areas of network management, communications and fundraising will definitely help the initiative to not only redistribute work more evenly, but also free up some time for the Board to dedicate to more strategic processes. It is interesting that the suggestions for additional capacity

overlap with the ‘poorly functioning’ taskforces. Consideration should be given to the need for a sustained focus on these core network elements through resourcing and locating these roles in the Secretariat.

There is potential to have a geographically distributed secretariat – recruiting the best possible candidates for the required role and allowing them to work from their home country institutions. There is potential to register the secretariat in a European country – to maintain links/deal with the limitations of DGD funding. This is practised by many global organizations with globally distributed teams while holding their registration in another country. Should this be possible, the Board would need to consider the impact on the receipt and distribution of funding, although, other organisations have resolved these issues and could be learned from.

### Recommendations

1. Resolve the secretariat transfer issue as a matter of priority.
2. Develop a framework to support the transfer of the secretariat function.
3. Develop a framework for which decisions can be made at secretariat level and which need to go to board level

### Good practices

1. Secretariat voice is heard in decision making, but Board are the decision makers and Secretariat are the implementers.
2. Having the secretariat based in global south.
3. Utilising young health researchers to gain experience through their involvement in the secretariat

Perception of the balance between professionals and volunteers and implications for effectiveness of the initiative

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This section explores whether **there are sufficient volunteers to operationalise the initiative [A01]** and whether or not **volunteers have the resources/times/skills to operationalise the initiative [A02]**.

Informants stated that the initiative was very dependent on volunteer time, noting that the secretariat had only one full-time, paid employee complemented by some additional part-time contributions. All governance team members volunteer and there is high reliance on voluntary contributions from the broader ITM Antwerp and Secretariat hosting institution staff. In addition, the co-hosts for the ventures contribute a significant amount of volunteer time to the initiative. In 2020 capacity was supplemented by the recruitment of a distance learning coordinator for three to four months to support the virtual programme.

Governance team members in particular were concerned there was a need to stimulate more volunteering because they were all having to take on multiple roles – especially during the preparation for the venture which was often a ‘scramble’ to deliver at the end. Several respondents noted the need for stability and indicated that better constituted taskforces – with the right skills and people - would make it easier for people to contribute in a more structured way. There was a general sense that there was a need to be clearer about the initiative’s volunteering needs and to have possibilities for smaller commitments of time for people to be able to manage with their professional and personal commitments.

*I think that some of the things that they ask for are too time intensive. I cannot take time out to teach for three weeks. It is not possible. Also, things like going to the country and staying with them that is not possible because my work will not give me that time to do that. That is important to think about for volunteering different people have different responsibilities professional and personal. Nobodies time is more important it is just that people have different availabilities. [Alumni, 2016]*

The reflection on the need for stability and continuity came up repeatedly – with a sense that there were not enough people involved in the activities of the initiative to create the time for the more strategic work that

enable the initiative to meet unmet potential. There was however one outlier who felt that the levels of volunteering were sufficient and that no incentives for volunteering were needed.

While the Secretariat is considered to be relatively stable, other areas were in a state of flux because of high reliance on volunteers. Hence there were informants who felt that it was important to have additional paid role(s) to deliver the programme of work. There were also sustainability concerns centred around the high reliance on the ITM Antwerp liaison function and the risk of losing organisational memory and functionality once the person in the role moved on. It was suggested that this be considered for a full-time paid role in the future as it was unrealistic that the quality and quantity of the curated content and support for blogging could be replicated using volunteers.

Concerns about the high reliance on volunteers centred on the risk of losing organisational memory, inconsistent commitment, need for additional skills/capacities, and difficulties with enforcing accountability. Additionally, a few respondents noted the risk of burnout for those individuals fulfilling multiple roles. Counter views included the idea that volunteer turnover kept the network 'fresh', and that formalisation would impact on the spirit, creativity and flexibility of the network. There is a general agreement though that some formalisation needed to happen, and the stability of the network would benefit from having some paid staff.

*We need capacities to run such a network. It cannot fully be voluntary. Not governance paid for. But the secretariat has to be more equipped and staffed and with more capacity to build those databases and ensure maximum of people are exposed to opportunities and [then can] create a vision for the network and sustain it. [Alumni 2012]*

A concern raised by a secretariat staff member was that professionalisation needs money, and so would expose the initiative to donor demands, which in turn would potentially have a negative impact on the spirit of the venture. They however did acknowledge that key roles do need to be resourced properly.

*We do not have resources to fund beyond secretariat so hard to professionalise. It would be good to at least fund the secretariat [Governing Board member]*

Respondents suggested improvements to volunteering and creating better balance in the network: develop and share a clear structure, term limits and role expectations; encourage constructive engagement and allow people to find a place in the initiative; provide some incentives for participation (travel allowances, stipends, honoraria); use the residency funding to support activities directly linked to EV; establish small support networks for individuals completing tasks so that they could reach out for advice and support around particular technical issues like fundraising; and, ensure that partner institutions had a dedicate 0.5 FTE post available to support the initiative. One additional recommendation was that a paid role be developed that sits between the Board and secretariat staff to manage project implementation.

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## Discussion

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The initiative should be congratulated on motivating committed volunteers who have sustained the initiative and enabled delivery of high-quality ventures to date. However, it is clear that this comes at a personal cost to some volunteers and that widening engagement would help with sustainability and to counter burnout. Communication on the number of roles needed and number of roles taken on by taskforces would ensure alumni know what is needed. Having some smaller engagement tasks for alumni who are motivated to volunteer but are not able to commit to large inputs of time would be beneficial but would need careful balancing to ensure that they do not require more management time than they provide in terms of inputs.

**Is there a need to professionalise EV? At present the board and most taskforces are run on a voluntary basis, capitalising on the drive of alumni. The secretariat has some funding but not structural funding.**

### Should some functions be more embedded?

Depending on the intention of the initiative going forward, a slightly larger coordination/management function would definitely strengthen the initiative as there are real concerns about overreliance on a few people. A new strategy would underline what skills and capacities required for this coordination/management function.

'Professionalisation' would have the following benefits: it would bring in skills not currently well represented amongst alumni, for example, fundraising, would ensure smooth running of some operational aspects taking pressure from board and releasing their time to be more strategic and creative; and enable more aspects of the network to meet their potential rather than only having capacity to deliver the venture every two years.

Care needs to be taken so as not to negatively affect the culture of the initiative which is highly valued. More clarity on the expectations of volunteers, communicated in advance of taking on tasks and supported by an accountability mechanism will support and enhance volunteering. Incentives, particularly for early career participants and alumni in LMICs with high participation costs, would be of great benefit. These incentives could include stipends and honoraria and direct support to aid their participation, for example data subsidies. Incentives are discussed in more detail elsewhere in the report.

#### Recommendations

1. Consider a broader set of paid roles – project/network manager and fundraiser in particular.
2. Strengthen communication on the number and type of volunteer roles required
3. Have different levels of volunteer engagement/tasks for alumni with less availability

#### Good practices

1. High levels of commitment and professionalism from volunteers

### Perception of actual and potential contributions of partner institutions

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This section explores the role of partners and in particular **whether partners actively engage in the initiative and leverage resources [A07]**

Generally, informants stated that co-hosts were highly valued and played a key role in the delivery of the ventures – ensuring that local logistics and partnerships were in place and supporting the preparation and training programme during the venture. In addition, co-hosts participate in selection, refer and encourage new applicants, sponsor some participants, manage local logistics, manage local relationships, contribute to programme design, and arrange local health system visits. In some instances, co-hosts also engage in local fundraising. It was identified that the Secretariat has an important role to play in supporting the venture partners and also making sure that the venture remains on track. A good working relationship between the Secretariat and the co-host was considered critical to the success of ventures.

*I think we work very closely with the partner in the run up to the venture. We rely heavily on them to support selection of the venue and small things like catering as they are local. Before the venture there is a lot of coordination and working with the partner and the secretariat does all of that coordination and liaison. [Secretariat staff]*

Informants considered alignment of values as vital to the success of the initiative - academic institutions who work in the same spirit and see the advantage to have staff involved and benefit from the relationship.

*You need an institution who wants to do it, sees benefit and is motivated. [ITM Antwerp staff/ex staff]*

*I think it is important for the partner to really contribute to everything to the whole thinking process to be involved in every step of the process. Because that also leads to a real commitment. We were looking for ways to be involved in the thinking process to find ways to make it possible on the spot. That was not necessarily in terms of finding funding it was giving in kind for example space, facilities. Work in full transparency. Regular contact and to be involved in every step of the whole thing. [ITM Antwerp staff/ex staff]*

There were, however, concerns raised that sometimes partnerships felt like a one-off relationship and that there was potential for more strategic alignment and sustained engagement. Informants felt that EV4GH needed to be clearer about this expectation and work to develop the relationship proactively. An additional concern was that the basis of relationships were often individual, and there was a need to broaden these to create institutional partnerships. The majority of respondents indicated that they would like to develop more long-term relationships beyond the venture project.

*[It] still feels like individual relationships hold the partnerships together and there is a need to develop more institutional connections. I had the backing of [the leadership] I could write and ask for the staff time and the space. The fact that we were staff and we were hosting HSR was why they did it, rather than backing the venture. But the new leadership might have been different. [Partner staff member]*

ITM Antwerp staff aspired to partner institutions taking a role in driving the EV4GH movement, but the reality is that the physical distance – when ventures are held in other parts of the world and natural falloff in engagement post-venture makes it difficult to sustain. Informants suggested there was a need to consider how partner would benefit from a relationship with EV4GH beyond the ventures. There is a sense from ITM and secretariat staff that the future role of the partners was becoming clearer through each iteration of the initiative.

ITM Antwerp was seen as critical in the EV4GH partnerships providing direct support to the initiative through contribution of staff time, fundraising for and managing the DGD grant, and providing staff time from the departments to support participant selection and teaching on the programme. One respondent described the ITM Antwerp contribution in the following way.

*ITM the founding partner has been the backbone and lifeline of EV. We are sure about the funding and the idea, technical backup anything that is required they are always there for that. [Partner staff member]*

Reflecting on the relationship with sponsors, respondents noted that the relationship was limited to funding EVs to participate and that it was hard to bring them on board. Several respondents who had been involved in fundraising for scholarships suggested that while scholarships support was appreciated, the value they bring may not be worth the effort needed to secure the scholarships. This was particularly true for private sector partnerships which had high demands. However, other informants felt that EV4GH was on a learning curve and that the initiative needed to build knowledge on which types of institutions would be likely to sponsor participants.

In relation to private sector partnership, respondents indicated there were a few instances where potential sponsors approached EV4GH, but these are few and focused on scholarships. In these engagements there is no indication of the potential for a long-term relationship. The one example cited reinforced the idea that individual exposure/relationships are particularly important – the sponsor had heard about EV4GH when a former director of IPH Bangalore joined the institution and it was through this exposure that that the organisation sponsored some scholarships.

Respondents, suggested the following improvements: partner institutions be reorientated to be regional hubs; that they fundraise for two to three participants from their region; and, that partners could contribute more talks or facilitation in the face-to-face and virtual programmes. It was suggested that co-hosts could link EV4GH

to domestic networks, institutions and activists. Another suggestion was that new partnerships be explored through the development of an internship programme with global health institutions and governments to create opportunities for EVs to extend their influence.

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## Discussion

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It is important that the initiative differentiates between the different types of partners it has and uses this to better understand the nature of these relationships from both the EV4GH and partner viewpoint. Clarity of expectations, a clear basis for cooperation, and clarity on mutually beneficial outcomes would serve to strengthen partnerships.

The following partnership types were suggested from the interviews:

- Local host – can have multiple roles, but primarily focussed on providing the administrative and logistical support to the venture
- Sponsor – provides funding for scholarships
- Supporting partner – provides in kind resources to the venture, including access to platforms, review of applications, facilitators or speakers, or information about internships.
- Donor – provides resources to the overall initiative beyond the venture – can support specific projects or programme or make a contribution to the operating costs of the venture similar to DGD
- Regional representative – potential future partnership that helps to widen applications from the region and make connections with potential funders; could also support regional collaborative work
- Country representative - potential future partnership that helps to widen applications from the country and make connections with potential funders; could also support country collaborative work

There is high potential for further value to accrue from the partnerships, but to realise this, EV4GH will need to take a more deliberate and strategic approach to defining and unlocking that value. In particular, more consideration needs to be taken as to what partners would gain from their investment in the initiative. For local hosts consideration would need to be made as to how they move to becoming a supporting partner.

### **How can partner institutes become more involved, beyond the venture where they acted as co-host?**

The relationship between EV4GH and co-hosts is currently driven mainly through a few individuals in the institutions hosting the venture. In some cases, there are deeper strategic commitments and, wherever possible, these should be leveraged. The basis for these linkages will be a clearer articulation of the mutual benefits that the partnership will bring to enable a more strategic relationship, and to stimulate investment from the co-host.

While the current partnership form may be sufficient in that a few individuals from the co-host do make contributions towards the planning and delivery of the venture, given the expressed desire to strengthen these relationships, EV4GH will need to invest in proactively seeking out and developing broad ranging partnerships with institutions who share their values and to also invest in maintaining the relationships post venture. Consideration should be made as to where responsibility for developing these partnership relations sits within the initiative. If the secretariat was expanded, they could take on more of a role but it would require Board level engagement as well preferably from alumni with experience of partnership work. Additionally, there is an opportunity to look strategically at how partnerships can enable EV4GH to meet its strategic aims once the planning process is completed. For example this might include partners who have experience in innovation online, activist networks, or partnerships seeking to support early career researchers.

### Recommendations

1. Expand and clarify the typology proposed and map and assess current and potential partnerships.
2. As part of the broader strategy development consider what partnerships would be required to advance the initiative's objectives.
3. Develop a partnership strategy that differentiates the different types of partners and highlights how they add value
4. Develop a clearer understanding of the evolving role from local host to supporting partner.

### Good practices

1. The secretariat works very closely with the co-host in preparation for the venture
2. There is a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities for the co-host

## Perception of the degree to which there is a learning and facilitative environment for EV4GH

This section looks at a **learning and facilitative environment for EV4GH** and how it **uses M&E to assess the effectiveness of and improve on the selection, learning programme and engagement of alumni [A18]**.

The initiative is planned and implemented using a workplan that is developed to organise the EV venture every two years. Core tasks are defined with clear outputs which are tracked through monthly progress meetings. The relevant taskforces also report back during these monthly sessions. The plan is monitored by the Secretariat which also accounts to their own institution through monthly meetings and annual individual and project review processes. There are no formal performance evaluation measures within EV4GH and when issues do arise, they are dealt with during scheduled governance calls.

HSG reporting is considered useful by respondents from the secretariat and governance teams as the annual report documents the previous year's activities and includes the plan for the activities for the year to follow. This helps to keep track of plans for the upcoming year. Financial reporting, completed at the end of each venture cycle is also considered useful.

Secretariat, ITM Antwerp and governance team members commented that EV4GH has weak monitoring with little to no systematisation. Currently the initiative does not have any key performance indicators or a monitoring framework. There is an evaluative survey conducted at the end of each venture for which a report is generated, however consistent indicators are not collected or analysed across ventures. There is data on the number of alumni which can be analysed by country of origin and region, however, data is not gender disaggregated. Several informants commented that achievements and interests of alumni are not sufficiently tracked, and that the alumni database has gaps, and does not track alumni engagement with the network.

Informants agreed on the need for systematisation of monitoring, regular evaluation and systematic collection of alumni feedback to inform improvements. Investment in periodic external evaluations was also suggested.

Respondents felt it was important to quantify impact for example, by mapping the trajectory of alumni to assess how many of them had attained leadership positions in the sector; had progressed in their academic careers; and, were publishing more. This has been done previously through the collection and publishing of 10 case studies to celebrate the tenth anniversary of EV4GH. Several respondents felt it is important to collect and package data and to use it to showcase the programme in support of fundraising.

It was noted that the initiative should be tracking diversity statistics as diversity was considered as key part of the EV4GH approach. It was recognised that process indicators would help monitor performance and strengthen accountability and an expressed need was articulated to define a small set of quality indicators that can be used for comparisons across cohorts.

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## Discussion

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Linked to the need for a strategy, it will be important agree the milestones and markers that will indicate progress. Then a small set of indicators can be agreed, and the systems set up to monitor those. Much of the workplan monitoring is already in place, but without the definition of core indicators. Both qualitative and quantitative indicators should be defined, and appropriate data collection tools developed. Such tools need to be simple and focussed on a small number of critical indicators. Indicators will need to be analysed periodically to determine trends and to build up an impact narrative that could support fundraising. A pick list of indicators and some thoughts on how to track and analyse them can be found in the draft monitoring framework (Output 3) page 100.

Monitoring data will provide a basis for internal accountability and improving programme delivery. Important areas for consideration when designing the monitoring framework would be to track whether EV4GH is achieving diversity; the quality of the ventures – from both a delivery and participant perspective; to give indications of areas of improvement and simple tracking of progress towards targets.

### Recommendations

1. Review and adapt the monitoring framework provided as Output 3
2. Develop an implementation strategy for collecting, recording and reporting on M&E
3. Create a standard format for the post venture evaluation that is integrated with the M&E framework

### Good practices

1. Evaluation conducted post venture (although standardisation is needed).

## Impact

This section focusses on high-level outcomes and impact. Due to the difficulty in measuring and attributing these effects the section looks at perceptions of outcomes and impacts.

### Perception of impact on professional effectiveness

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This section explores the extent to which informants stated there was an **increase in effectiveness in professional roles [C01]** because of participating in the initiative and to what extent they have had the **opportunity to put the skills and knowledge they gained into practice [A34]**.

*It has had an incredible impact on my personal career. It is a recipe for success. [Alumni 2014]*

Informants identified that seeing both alumni and experts in the field at EV4GH and HSRS broadened their horizons as to what was possible within the field, giving them inspiration for their future careers. Informants with careers in research identified how EV4GH's focus on a social-justice lens, the importance of context and the importance of communication had positively influenced how they design and implement research projects. Some informants spoke to being exposed to new types of research through their participation in HSRS through EV4GH. Alumni described involvement in implementation research and community engagement projects in their professional roles.

*I have a meaningful job where I am contributing and EV was part and parcel of that. [Alumni 2014]*

Informants also identified that participation in the EV4GH network allowed them to keep up to date in the field. This was through discussion within the network and the information disseminated through the EV4GH

Google Group, IHP newsletter and EV4GH newsletter. This information was identified as being extremely useful to them professionally, giving alumni a reputation of being at the cutting edge. Multiple informants stated that they regularly circulated the information received to other colleagues.

*The network and impact of being part of the bigger global community still helps me to be up to date and share that knowledge with my colleagues... there is constant learning... I feel up to date in my professional life. [Alumni 2010]*

Skills gained in EV4GH in relation to communication were repeatedly highlighted as being built upon and utilised throughout professional careers. Communication skills were used routinely within professional roles but also in order to gain new opportunities (discussed further below). The degree to which alumni felt that these skills were crucial were exemplified by a small number of examples amongst informants to developing training materials to deliver similar training to that received on EV4GH within their institutions or projects. In addition, alumni stated that the ability to think critically and to be confident to ask bold questions had increased their effectiveness in being a champion for social justice within their professional roles. For EV4GH participants who were not fluent in English, spoke of the programme giving them motivation to improve their English-language skills post participation.

*EV has been fundamental ... Every skill has gone from strength to strength. Not learned these things at this scale in other places. [Alumni 2014]*

Informants also identified that EV4GH gave them confidence that they could be effective within professional roles that stretched them to collaborate with people from other parts of the world. Some alumni also described the usefulness of the EV4GH network as a sounding board to discuss difficult issues within their workplaces. EV4GH was cited as providing motivation through the example of others to keep a high level of commitment within the field – i.e. to take on more responsibility either voluntarily or within paid work.

*EV helped me believe that I am something. I belong to a global network that is of value in my institution and wider roles. To belong to this network helps me professionally. [Alumni 2014]*

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## Discussion

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It is clear that EV4GH alumni felt that their skills and attitudes developed improve their professional effectiveness. In particular they valued and were routinely using the communication and critical thinking skills. But the attitudes towards social justice, the role of communication in influencing policy and practice and the importance of context have had profound effects on the way in which alumni design and deliver research. This is an important finding as it increases the potential of alumni to do research which has an impact.

Informants also identified real value in the emails received through the Google Group enabling them to keep up to date and build a reputation for being at the cutting edge. There is evidence of multiplier effects of the training and network through onward broadcast of email information and development of training interventions based on EV4GH content. There is the potential to support this multiplier effect further by providing alumni with training packs to help support them to cascade training within their professional roles.

### Recommendations

1. Training materials/packs to help alumni cascade training to institutions and/or projects in their region

### Good practices

1. Providing relevant information to keep alumni up to date on key issues in global health via the network.
2. Influencing attitudes to social justice, the role of communication in influencing policy and practice and importance of context

Perception that participation in the initiative has resulted in increased confidence and motivation to engage and influence global health debates at global, regional, national and local levels

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This section explores the degree to which the initiative resulted in **increased confidence and motivation to engage and influence in global health debates at any level [C02]**.

Informants identified that the encouragement of role models, support of their peers and messaging on the importance of critical voices, gave them confidence to speak out and be heard, firstly at HSRS and then more widely. EV4GH was seen as a catalyst to open alumni's eyes to their own potential, to understand the importance of being critical and not accept the status quo, and to question underlying assumptions and ideologies. It was also considered to be a safe and supportive space for participants to develop their voice

A few informants identified that they had been part of large consultative fora and the skills from EV4GH enabled them to listen and respond effectively to arguments. One identified having the confidence to participate in unscripted debates from their experience with EV4GH. Some informants talked about how the experience had given them the confidence to ask difficult and critical questions to their seniors or politicians in the policy space. Whilst motivation to engage and influence debates might be high, informants also identified that alumni needed to find the 'right' professional role where they were able to use their voice effectively. Increased confidence was also associated by one informant, with being able to take up roles within other TWG's within HSG.

*I already know I should speak truth to power which is difficult. But EV has given me more strength. You are not alone in this battle. You can join hands and make a movement. [Alumni 2020]*

*One of the things I noticed is if for a lot of people there is a hesitation to write and engage and they are bright people from the sciences. But they are shy. Everyone is scared. EV helps researchers draw those soft skills out in a very safe environment. [Alumni 2012]*

*It gave me confidence when you are PHD student and when you in the basement of the institution you feel your impact is tiny. [Alumni 2014]*

*I have been amongst the youngest people (by 15 years) in health policy circles in my country and EV gave me that confidence to make my voice heard. [Alumni 2016]*

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## Discussion

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Participation in EV4GH has clearly increased motivation and confidence to engage in global health debates. Not only to engage but also to be critical; but importantly to listen and respond. Hence EV4GH provides more empowered individuals within the global health space able to engage with and, where necessary, challenge policy and decision makers at local, regional, national and global levels. At the present time, however, these individuals are working individually and not collectively. Opportunities to leverage a more collective voice have been discussed elsewhere.

### Good practices

1. Empowering participants in the training to value their own voice and be confident to ask critical questions
2. Building debate skills including listening and tailoring responses to their audience
3. Providing a safe and supportive space for participants to develop their voice

## Perception of whether or not participation has led to increased opportunities

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This section relates to the outcome **[C03] Increased opportunities (job roles, collaborations, funding, scholarships)**. In general, alumni felt that participation in EV4GH had led to increased opportunities, these were either: directly through participation in the network, internships, governance, or facilitation; indirectly through applying for opportunities circulated by EV4GH; or indirectly through the increased skills, confidence and motivation that enabled them to take up new opportunities. For some, particularly when based in HIC academic institutions, it was difficult for them to identify how much their opportunities were attributable to EV4GH and they spoke of intangible benefits rather than opportunities. For others they welcomed the opportunities that were available even if they had not taken advantage of them due to already having the opportunities they needed through other routes.

Informants identified that they gained additional skills, opportunities to attend HSRS and the opportunity to increase networks through volunteering for EV4GH, either as facilitators or members of the board. ITM Antwerp also offer a residency programme for EV4GH alumni which was identified as creating opportunity to further their writing aims and/or develop the EV4GH network. This was highlighted as being an opportunity that many would not have had otherwise, especially less academic inclined alumni. It enabled interns to focus on writing, summarising, and finding their own voice. Others spoke about how participation in the internship helped them find their route in academia through imagining what their role might be and through gaining advice on PhD topics and universities. Interns are also offered opportunities to attend classes and in at least one case to cover high level meetings in global health, the WHO executive meeting. In addition, EV4GH alumni are exposed to and directly encouraged to engage with HSG. Many alumni are in important positions throughout HSG, on other TWGs and on the board. EV4GH alumni have also reached out to each other directly to create collaborative programmes, participate in panel discussions, organise conferences or write op-eds, articles, or blogs. Importantly, many of these collaborations were south-south. Opportunities to publish were enhanced through platforms which had a strong link to EV4GH e.g. IHP newsletter and BMJ GH.

*Writing editorials and doing research with Wim [ITM Antwerp], that helped me imagine my role as an academic in global health. So, it was formative for me. [Alumni 2010]*

The content of the training and exposure to role models, was cited as enabling participants to better navigate their career pathway and take advantage of opportunities that came their way. For some individuals, discussions with facilitators enabled them to make life changing decisions regarding their future and they gained important contacts to enable relocation and/or academic opportunities. Other individuals spoke about how the experience had opened their horizons to possible careers pathways and the scope of international collaboration they could participate in. One informant also identified that they had spoken to EV mentors about how they could refocus a new role to create meaningful research in partnership with their national Ministry of Health. Communication skills were identified as enabling improvements in applications for scholarships, PhDs, or jobs. Mentorship from other EVs was also used to help improve applications. Course content and experience were identified as not only providing knowledge but strengthening confidence, which was important in gaining jobs or promotion opportunities.

*It fundamentally changed my view of the profession and the world. Before I started, I mainly think about my research as focussed on my own country and the professional ladder for me without thinking about the global horizon.... It gave me the confidence to work with people from other areas of the world. [Alumni 2012]*

*It does not just open doors but also helps understand how people navigate their careers. [Alumni 2012]*

*This [EV] has helped me shape my career in a multilateral organisation. I owe a good chunk of that to what I got from emerging voices. [Alumni 2016]*

Participation in EV4GH was seen to enhance participant's CVs. This was cited as being particularly important. Alumni used participation in EV4GH to demonstrate their commitment to global health, their ability to work with other cultures, access to international networks, and exposure to international best practices. However, whilst participants identified that EV4GH looked good on their CV they stated that for employers/reviewers outside the HSG bubble they were likely to be more interested in tangible outputs.

*From a professional point of view, it catapulted me into the global health world which would not have happened without being there [EV4GH]. [Alumni 2012]*

The motivation and skills to write blogs was also identified as being linked to increased opportunities by informants. One informant stated that when being informally interviewed for a job role at WHO the interviewer talked about having reviewed their blogs and it had made them feel they would be a good candidate. Another had used blogging to gain the attention of local policy makers who were planning a national conference which led to them being invited to help shape the content of that conference. Other alumni spoke about using blogs to build their career and influence nationally.

*Writing blogs, as inspired by EV, helped me build my career. [Alumni 2016]*

The opportunities circulated within the Google Group had been applied for and some alumni had been successful in gaining employment or training scholarships. Information on conferences and courses was also cited as being useful in furthering their professional careers. These opportunities were not ones that the alumni who talked about them had seen elsewhere.

*EV literally changed my life through the new appointment that I got... This group gave me that platform, I also want to offer that platform to others so it might change someone else's life. [Alumni 2018]*

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## Discussion

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### **What difference has participating in EV4GH made for the alumni?**

Participation in EV4GH has for some alumni, provided additional opportunities both directly and indirectly. Perhaps the most transformative of these has been the broadening of horizons of the types and scope of career pathways available to them and the confidence to attain them. This was particularly important for participants who came from non-HIC research institutions. Connections made with alumni and external experts have for some individuals provided significant opportunities in terms of academic mentorship and collaborations. The communication training clearly has multiplier effects in enabling better job/scholarship/PhD applications and for some alumni to leverage opportunities through blogging. Participants who gained an ITM Antwerp/EV internship clearly felt that this had been a productive step in furthering their career and skillsets. Hence this is an important synergy and should be continued. However, this opportunity is inevitably only open to a few participants. Hence, further strategic partnerships could be made even if these are only related to information sharing on other internship or employment opportunities for early career researchers.

It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to know how many alumni read the Google Group emails and therefore see the opportunities that are circulated. However, as discussed earlier it is likely that there are some who do not regularly read all emails and hence it might be useful as recommended earlier in this report to have an opportunities board on the website rather than circulate these through the email.

The uneven access to opportunities, especially international opportunities, is often cited as a barrier to full participation of LMIC academics in the global research market. Hence EV4GH's contribution to making this more of a level playing field is an important contribution to decolonising global health research.

## Recommendations

1. Develop strategic partnerships to share information on internships, scholarships and employment routes for early career researchers

## Good practices

1. Circulating job and scholarship opportunities
2. Circulating conferences and training opportunities
3. Providing internship opportunities to develop skills further
4. Exposure to role models at various stages of their career
5. Encouraging participants to expand their horizons

Perception of the extent of influence or leadership of alumni and contribution of EV4GH in attaining that position

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This section of the report explores the degree to which EV4GH alumni are in **leadership or influence positions at global, regional, national or local levels [C05]** and have **influence and impact on health systems research, policy and practice at global, regional, national or local levels [C06]**.

Alumni are at different stages of their career, with those who attended the earliest ventures moving into mid-career, but the majority can still be categorised as being in early career. The alumni informants were predominantly working in three type of institution: academia, NGOs, or MoH/other government agencies. A large number of alumni informants had moved into lectureship or Assistant Professor roles within academia with a smaller number at higher levels such as Professor or Senior Lecturer; positions were held in HIC and LMIC institutions. A very few were heading up their own departments or units. There were a number of informants who highlighted that they were on short term contracts dependent on project income. Some of the informants based in academia were PhD candidates.

Some alumni were in technical roles within NGOs or INGOs working directly on health policy and systems issues. In some cases, alumni were heading up research departments within NGOs and were influencing the research agenda and the way in which research was delivered. Some alumni were working for UN agencies including UNICEF, UNDP, WHO; in some cases, heading up regional teams within these high-level institutions.

Alumni informants were also working as advisors to government bodies at a local or national level. Examples of informants work for their governments included supporting structural reforms, developing regulatory policy, advising on adoption of innovation from other countries and managing the COVID-19 response. There were a very small number of informants who were working as independent contractors.

Positions of leadership and influence were not limited to alumni's professional roles many of them also contributed voluntarily to editorships/review of scientific journals, development of networks (including EV4GH), and (as already discussed) multiple roles within HSG.

One informant highlighted that all the alumni were on different trajectories which made it difficult to compare and that indeed it was important not to compare. However, many of the alumni did tend to compare themselves with other alumni particularly those they saw as the 'stars'. One recommendation from an informant was to have more follow up with alumni to discuss how they are progressing with the goals they set themselves when participating in the EV4GH programme. Another alumni talked about the choice that alumni had to make about whether to seek employment (and influence) in HIC institutions, on the global stage through INGOs or in their home nations. Some alumni talked about rejecting the allure of working overseas to focus on producing contextual research needed in their nations of origin.

*I have moved on from being an early career researcher to being somebody who sees the realities of needing to do research whilst being embedded in the south and not aspiring to go to the UN or WHO or be in global health in the typical manner.... I was very clear that I logged out of that track long back. Now I struggle with the grant raising and doing contextually rich research where there are not so many grants. [Alumni 2010]*

Many alumni informants were reticent to share their achievements and were more vocal about their peers' achievements. Some alumni identified that their influence was 'small' or 'silent' or 'behind the scenes'.

*I am not being on the TV kind of EV. I am happy to lead from behind. [Alumni 2014]*

*There is so much more to do before I would consider myself as influential. But you realise that you do have a sphere of influence. [Alumni 2014]*

Examples that alumni gave of having influence included publishing readers or being involved in guideline development with WHO, working closely with government departments of health or private health providers to improve facility performance, providing policy briefs to national government or to regional groups of national governments, working directly on government policy, publishing books, undertaking research including operational research to solve specific health systems problems, innovative research projects, and membership of the Lancet commission amongst others. A number of alumni who were predominantly engaged in research talked about how they were using research and evaluations to push the critical agenda encapsulated within EV4GH. A number of alumni had a role to play in the COVID-19 response and some had set up support groups with other alumni to reflect on their experiences. One alumnus described how EV4GH influenced how they in turn taught their students which was a new arena where they were now having influence. Alumni who were consistently highlighted by other informants as having significant impact were Seye Abimbola through his role as editor of BMJ Global Health; Roopa Dhatt through her role in Women in Global Health contributing to some of the most influential global health political meetings; Deepika Saluja as co-founder of Women in global Health India and Shakira Choonara through her role leading the African Union Youth Forum.

*We are very near to the MoH. They ask for policies suggestions. I use my expertise in research and communication skills to write policies suggestions for them. Sometimes we even try to communicate with policy makers to influence them on what we think is important. Even when not their priority. We are in roles that can make an improvement in policy. The degree to which they listen depends on the policy makers. We cannot communicate with the ones who signs the policy but to the Deputy Director they are in charge of writing the policy document. I think that is enough we can make sure that some ideas influence them. [Alumni 2016]*

*I am putting information into strategic decision-making packages for politicians. I do have an advisory role and I am telling them [HIC country government] to learn from the global south. I am able to move the needle a bit. [Alumni 2014]*

*I can already see how emerged and emerging people are doing wonderful things in their sector. Voices heard. Ideas on the table. .. We come from different countries and it feels like we can push for good science on the policy table. [Alumni 2014]*

Enablers to having influence cited by informants included the Google Group emails in providing a constant stream of latest thinking and evidence, opportunities provided through EV4GH to be on panels, confidence and skills to participate in high level forums and frame arguments in debates, nurturing relationships with policy makers and professional associations, motivation provided by EV4GH, role models from EV4GH, and confidence to ask critical questions again gained from EV4GH.

*A lot of that was fuelled by EV. I was able to do a lot of things behind the scenes. I was active in influencing policy... It is combination of the skills I learned and the energising effect. Seeing things from a different perspective. [Alumni 2016]*

*We are trying to adopt different innovative approaches in the health system from different countries; we are trying to get these endorsed and implemented. So far we have implemented different approaches. We have seen many successes; from pilot to large scale up approach. In that I have a role as a taskforce member to influence other members and policy makers to get that endorsement. EV has contributed because the newsletters and information coming weekly also the documents shared through social media I receive new and innovative approaches. I use them as influence in addition to WHO publications. Alumni 2010*

Barriers to having influence were constraints of employed positions, early stage of careers so not in positions of influence yet, learning how to work with policy makers, workload, and precarious employment. Influencing policy was also seen as a complex process which is not only dependent on having quality evidence and good communication – that other factors such as politics come into play.

*I found it very different being involved in programming and pushing policy makers and becoming a bit of a trouble maker. [Alumni 2014]*

*I am a drowning EV. Like most emerged, I am floundering. [Alumni 2012]*

Again, some alumni talked about how the network was not delivering to its full potential in terms of joined up impact. Working collaboratively was seen as a possible way in which impact could be catalysed or taking up voice on hot topics collectively for example COVAX. There was an appetite amongst some of the informants to engage collectively beyond writing. One alumnus talked about whether or not alumni could be guided more to positions of power and another whether the potential of the network had to wait until alumni were in higher positions of power.

*I think we need to plant people who one way or the other will be future global health players so that we will pass on our message and also participate in high level decision making and processes. We need to plug them into different places to promote what EV preaches in terms of equity, gender, nationality. [Alumni 2012]*

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## Discussion

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Alumni are moving into positions of influence in academia, NGOs and INGOs and government. They are working at global, regional, national, and subnational levels. They are exerting influence through innovations in research, contextual research, research with a social-justice focus, developing policy, policy briefs, advocacy, building networks, influencing new ECR and technical advice. They show the range of different types of influence it is possible to have – some highly visible and some mostly invisible (see Think Piece: A Spectrum of Activism - Output 2 page 62).

It is clear from the responses of the informants that they attribute some of their ability to have influence to the skills and attitudes they gained from EV4GH. They also continue to gain value from their membership of EV4GH through the constant supply of cutting edge thinking via the Google Group which they then utilise within their own spheres of influence. Having alumni attribute part of their ability to have influence to a short-term training intervention and network is an impressive achievement by EV4GH.

Despite evidence of some alumni moving up the career ladder in academia, problems were raised in relation to precarious funding reliant on projects and also the amount of time they were allocated to research as opposed to teaching and other duties. Particularly in LMICs there are often inadequate support systems and

clear career pathways for early career researchers<sup>8</sup>. There is an opportunity for EV4GH to become thought leaders and campaigners for progressive policies in academia to support early career researchers perhaps partnering with institutions such as the African Academy of Sciences and its equivalents in other regions.

The issue of facilitating collaboration and collective voice has been discussed earlier in this report. EV4GH has showcased some of the stories of its alumni through the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary testimonials available on the EV4GH website. These type of case studies are a good way of ensuring that the journeys of alumni can be utilised to demonstrate the strength of the programme and network. The ITM Antwerp/EV4GH internship could include developing case studies as these require the use and development of interviewing and writing skills. In addition, as part of the improvements to monitoring and evaluation, a short survey could be sent to alumni every two-years; within that there should be questions that ask alumni about their professional achievements and influence. Consideration of having recognition awards for outstanding achievements could be considered to further highlight the work of EVs, however, such schemes tend to favour the more visible and so it would be wise to think about having different categories that ensure that less visible influence was also recognised. Awards could be given at HSG – further raising visibility of alumni and their achievements.

### Recommendations

1. Use internships to capture case studies, stories and narratives
2. Recognise alumni achievements through EV4GH awards

Perception of the extent to which EV4GH has brought forward new voices within global health conferences and other events

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This section discusses **how effective EV4GH has been in bringing forward new voices, on global health conferences, and other fora and to what extent has EV4GH managed to "switch the poles" at symposia, and beyond eg more influence of Southern voices at these big conferences; but also perhaps with a view on the wider distribution of power/mainstream paradigm in "Global Health"**. This section draws on findings already given in the report and hence is purely discussion.

As there were relatively few informants from within the wider global health space that were interviewed for this evaluation, perceptions of the extent EV4GH has brought forward new voices is mainly from alumni and partners. There was widespread agreement that EV4GH had been successful in bringing forward a more youthful voice into HSRS. These voices have been predominantly from the global south and are gender balanced. However, there is less diversity when socio-economic status is taken into consideration. There are still geographic regions which are underrepresented both within the wider global health space, HSRS and EV4GH. There are still barriers to full participation based on lack of English language fluency. In addition, the conference has grown over the last ten years and the numbers of EV4GH participants has reduced. Whilst there are some alumni who manage to return to HSRS; many do not. EV4GH alumni do participate vocally, often individually, in other conferences and events but they may not be identifiable as EV4GH. But they take their confidence and motivation to engage critically to other areas.

Some of the alumni of EV4GH have become key players in the call to decolonise global health and this is discussed further in the next section. However, the question regarding increasing the influence of southern voices and the wider distribution of power/mainstream paradigms is one that does relate to critical mass and inertia. It is extremely difficult to know what critical mass of southern voices is needed to provide a tipping point to the mainstream paradigm. Increasing the opportunities for alumni to work collectively together might result in more impact particularly if there was a concerted effort to move discourse in a few thematic areas as already discussed in this report. These thoughts are expanded in the next section.

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<sup>8</sup> The British Academy and The Association of Commonwealth Universities (2016): The Next Generation: Idea and Experience in African Researcher Support.

Perception of the degree to which alumni have influenced the global health discourse, in a “constructively disruptive” way (new issues/approaches/paradigms) “decolonisation” “planetary health”

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This section relates to ToC outcome [C07], **Change in the global health discourse (new issues/approaches/paradigms) – “decolonisation” “planetary health” “constructive disruption”** and explores the underlying assumption [A36] that **EV4GH’s focus on health policy and systems research facilitates increased influence within global health debates and discussions.**

Alumni are bringing a different voice to the global health arena and attempting to influence the global health discourse. Whilst some alumni are more comfortable taking the softer influencing route through publishing and professional advisory roles with government or working for government with direct influence on policymakers, other alumni have taken a more public, vocal and activist role to constructively disrupt the discourse.

*The EV program in Cape Town made me realize that we all have opinions, and as young people, we are in a somewhat unique position of not having fallen (yet?) in the trap of a ‘business as usual’ mentality. We should therefore make our voices heard and aim for the ‘constructive disruption’ introduced to me during the EV program. [Alumni 2014]*

Alumni described working at a network and individual level to ask piercing questions at HSRS and other global fora. However, one informant described this as speaking to the converted and argued for linking into more predominant areas of global health such as epidemiology, health economics and public health. Alumni have also contributed to the discourse through different online platforms including BMJ Global Health, International Health Policies, and Devex amongst others. Activists linked to EV4GH have been noticeably visible in social media in relation to hot topics in global health.

*#DeconizeGobalHealth which started as a single tweet, may seem a vague construct that still requires unpacking. But what it tells us is that today, we have a new cadre of global health scholars and practitioners not just from the Global South but from the millennial generation.... [Alumni 2014]*

As one alumni surmised, the debate is gaining momentum and having a global effect which ultimately will impact research funding allocation.

*EV4GH is part of this planetary engine for global health decolonisation – it is an effective scout for amazing talent that for a long time was invisible in our discipline and a powerful convenor for all voices, both emerging and emerged to build lasting alliances for dismantling global health’s inherent coloniality and for co-designing a truly decolonised global health future. [Alumni 2014]*

One informant from the broader global HSG community described how EV4GH is focused on power issues but that they could be more strategic in picking up on other issues. The need to be more strategic was also raised by an ITM Antwerp staff member and by numerous alumni. Central topics identified by EVs included universal health coverage, planetary health, fragile and conflict affected states, the decolonisation agenda and equity.

*You need focus to be heard and cannot have an opinion on everything.... Whilst I believe that all EVs see climate change –still somehow we cannot manage to have a focused approach to that. We need a focal point if we are going to use it for change... we need to decide that for the next 2 years this is our platform. [ITM Antwerp ex-staff/staff]*

One key informant described the early years of EV4GH where the emphasis was very much on disruption and making noise, but with less organised arguments backing these actions up. Some informants described how a different type of disruption, more settled and institutionalised is now emerging within EV with activism based on opinion pieces such as academic writing, pod casts and blogs and with advocacy messages linked to a strong evidence base and arguments.

There have been powerful examples of “emerged alumni” who are playing very active roles in re-shaping the discourse at local, national and global levels. The following individuals were frequently referred to by key informants and it should be noted that many others have also been quite influential in recent years:

- Prashanth N Srinivas and his research on health equity, universal health coverage and primary health care in India
- Shakira Choonara, a prominent health activist in South Africa committed to health systems strengthening, advancing the feminist agenda and empowering youth
- Renzo Guinto, pushing the decolonisation agenda and planetary health issues
- Seye Abimbola who in his position at chief editor for BMJ Global Health has successfully channelled EV and other voices to constructively disrupt the global health discourse through commentaries, blogs, and publications
- Roopa Dhatt, founder of Women in Global Health, recently appointed as non-government advisor to the US delegation to the commission on the status of women

Alumni fell into three main categories; those who are more confident in critical writing, those doing influencing work in or with government and those who take on a more visibly prominent activist role. All were seen as valid ways of influencing the discourse. EVs recognised that there are many individuals and groups writing provocatively and that EV4GH has not yet reached a collective voice. They identified individual and network challenges to achieving this including finding time and timing within their career, balancing family and career, being restrained in their professional position and achieving the balance between being fearless and strategic.

*Because of this network with EV, sometimes I really push the boundaries here, not to risk my career but I nudge people. Because it is easy for people to let their fate be decided by the system... people could be still provocative constructively. [Alumni 2016]*

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## Discussion

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### **How does EV4GH contribute to the debates around Health Policy and Systems research both at international, national and local level? Should this focus be kept?**

It can be argued that EV4GH has been successful in influencing the global health discourse, in a “constructively disruptive” manner within HSRS but lesser so in the wider global health community. Whilst prominent EVs have successfully challenged and influenced the global health discourse at different levels (local, national, international), EV4GH has not yet achieved this as a collective voice.

EV4GH should continue to contribute to HPSR debates and more could be done to harness a movement around big issues and a collective voice to give EV4GH more leverage, power and ability to influence, building on and expanding the platforms it already uses. EV4GH should consider addressing this more strategically with a reasonable expectation of the likely impact they can achieve; visible disruption and/or actual change. This response should also reflect different country contexts and cultures which may influence the degree to which disruption and change are indeed feasible. The recommendations already made in this report regarding the choice of long-term focal areas should be agreed by the Board and alumni, but it is the new cohort who should lead on choosing the big issues of focus for the 2 years between ventures to ensure currency of EV4GH (also discussed earlier in this report). This will give a more focused advocacy and influencing agenda to EV4GH and may further strengthen their reputation as opinion makers.

### **Have EV4GH alumni managed to put new issues on the agenda, both content wise (eg equity) and methodologically?**

Some alumni are at the forefront of topical critical debates such as the conversation around decolonisation. It was the subject of more than 50 academic articles between January and December 2020, appeared as a new area covered in numerous conferences, and featured in public statements by leaders of global health organisations<sup>9</sup>. The string of decolonisation seminars across the world can be traced to EV influence and has a prominent EV footprint.

### **Have some dared to go beyond the mainstream, taking more provocative (but evidence-based) stances**

As already mentioned EVs are successfully disrupting the HPSR space through activism based on opinion pieces such as academic writing, pod casts and blogs and with advocacy messages linked to a strong evidence base and arguments. There are also powerful examples of alumni playing very active roles in re-shaping the discourse at local, national and global levels. Daring to go beyond the mainstream, if often perceived as “risky” for young researchers at this early stage in their career and in difficult political settings moreover.

#### **Recommendations**

1. Recognise that influence is understood in different ways and encourage EVs to use these different models to have an impact

## Sustainability

### Perception of the degree to which participation in EV4GH has lasting benefits

This section of the report **explores the extent to which informants perceived that the benefits of participation in EV4GH had lasting impact [A40].**

Many of the alumni informants for this evaluation spoke about how they utilise the skills that they gained through EV4GH routinely within their professional careers, but also how some changes in perspective or attitudes had shaped their work. The communication skills they gained had been practised and built on through presentations, writing, and communicating with policy influencers. But it was not just the skills, informants also talked about considering more carefully who they should be communicating with to influence policy or practice, how they should be communicating to reach the right audiences and writing in simpler language. Informants also spoke about being more aware of the need to raise their own visibility in order to spread their influence. Some alumni talked about participation in the venture motivating them to invest in further developing their skills afterwards for example English language skills or writing.

Lasting changes to attitudes to research amongst alumni informants were shaped by exposure to different cultures and experiences. The intensity of the EV4GH experience led to a knowing of the realities of others in a meaningful way that had a lasting effect on many of the informants. For some it had led to a deep commitment to contextualised research, for others a gain in confidence to collaborate with people outside their own country and yet others had been enabled to confront their discomfort in being a minority amongst participants from the global south. Being unafraid to speak truth to power, critical and holistic thinking influenced by the EV4GH experience also sustained within informants professional and/or voluntary work. Whilst EV4GH participants were selected because of their commitment to social justice this commitment was further reinforced through participation in the venture and the network.

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<sup>9</sup> Khan M, Abimbola S, Aloudat T, et al. Decolonising global health in 2021: a roadmap to move from rhetoric to reform. *BMJ Global Health* 2021;**6**:e005604. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2021-005604

*I would say that the spirit to be open to collaboration – that came from Emerging Voices. To be open to collaboration with people who are not researchers or do not do the same work. That is a lasting benefit. Also ... we should be very respectful and aware of different perspectives. It comes with the term global health but at the time as a student I was not that aware of the importance of other voices who may see the world very differently from me. There is no absolute truth. Everything depends on perspective. There might be different paths or different solutions to a problem. [Alumni 2014]*

Participation in the EV4GH network as seen by some informants as a constant source of self-confidence and empowerment enabling alumni to be confident of their own expertise. Self-confidence was reinforced through the use of cohort-based WhatsApp groups to both celebrate achievements but also act as a sounding board during difficult professional periods. Achievements are also celebrated through Twitter and newsletters. Many alumni also talked about having created life-long friendships and having a sense of belonging that would live with them throughout their career.

The network gives a continual benefit to many of retaining a professional reputation, of being at the cutting edge through the circulation of curated information via the Google Group. Whilst many informants stated that the potentials for mutual collaboration amongst alumni were not fully optimised, there were examples of alumni leveraging the network to contribute to academic fora, projects and collaborative writing. For instance, one 2013 alumna estimated that a third of their publications since the venture had been with other alumni.

One of the legacies of EV4GH that was identified by informants was its effect on HSG in recognising the importance and power of young voices within the conference space and also embracing new and innovative ways of communicating.

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## Discussion

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### **Do the benefits (if any) of participating in EV4GH last? How can sustainability be improved?**

It is clear that EV4GH participants gain skills that both built on and are of use throughout their careers but also that the experience can and does have a profound effect on some of the alumni. This is through a change in the attitudes that underly the way in which they seek to produce research and/or influence policy and practice. It is characterised by a social justice perspective, a respect for difference and a commitment to think critically and engage constructively. These are skills and attitudes which are central to an ability to lead transformative change and hence are central to improving global health. It is notoriously difficult to create changes in attitude through short-term training interventions and so this is a commendable achievement.

The boost to self-confidence which occurs at the venture but is then consistently amplified through engagement in the network is also vital in enabling underrepresented groups to take on more prominence in the field. The network also continues to boost participants knowledge through the Google Group and there are opportunities to extend lasting benefits by providing a greater variety of inputs to alumni subsequent to the venture as they move their career – these have already been discussed in relation to the network.

### **Recommendations for ensuring the financial viability and sustainability of the initiative**

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This section reflects on the financial viability and sustainability of the initiative specifically in relation to **the sustainability of the initiative [C04], attractiveness to funders [IC7] and [A32] aims of EV4GH are attractive to funders**. These reflections are drawn from a number of respondent categories: alumni, ITM Antwerp and secretariat staff, partner staff and a small number of respondents external to the initiative.

EV4GH established a small fundraising taskforce to focus on resourcing the venture. The taskforce is resourced on a voluntary basis by people mainly without specific fundraising skills. It was widely reported that the fundraising efforts to date had been disappointing. Members of the taskforce stated they had little opportunity, in terms of available time and capacity, to fundraise for the network beyond the venture. One of the alumni who had worked on fundraising noted that the process was frustrating, that large amounts of effort needed to be expended in developing contacts and building relationships but that this often had a low rate of return. One partner noted that beyond the venture, the initiative had few concrete outputs that would be attractive to funders. Despite this it was widely felt that the EV4GH vision was still relevant and that the brand, having grown in prominence over the years, should be an attractive proposition for donors. The undoubted success of the initiative is demonstrated in the prominence of the participants and alumni at HSRS and alumni's growing stature and prominence within HSG, in academic publishing and in positions of leadership and influence across the world.

When asked to describe how to showcase EV4GH to potential funders respondents identified the importance of the global reach of the network and its role as an incubator for young leaders from LMICs who were actively contributing to improvements in the sector. The intervention described as providing value for money given its outcomes: at the individual level increased voice and confidence; and, at the collective level providing more effective leaders and influencers and the potential for collective or collaborative work. The alumni themselves are a strong selling point, many of whom attribute their improved practice, confidence and ability to engage in ways that they would not have before to the EV4GH initiative. The initiative continues to make an important contribution to the development of the field and improving practice in the sector.

Strong concern was voiced by informants that the sustainability of the initiative may be too dependent on a few individuals committing significant amounts of time and energy to EV4GH. They described how EV4GH should consider how it will continue to operate beyond the contribution and commitment of these individuals. As discussed later in this section, the need for a programme strategy and a linked sustainability strategy which includes plans for role succession, skills transfer and the retention of organisational memory is crucial.

Whilst many informants identified that funders wanted to fund more tangible things – like the training programme and the scholarships – one respondent questioned whether that was true. They were of the impression that some funders might be more interested in the long-term outcomes of the initiative. Others were concerned about the bias towards participants drawn from academic spaces and questioned whether EV4GH needed to be more radical in its orientation in order to attract more, and different kinds of funding. There was also a set of views that reflected on the need to institutionalise the programme more – that it was perhaps easier to fundraise for capacity development initiatives like EV4GH when it had an institutional base as a permanent and ongoing programme of a particular institution for example.

There were concerns raised, however, that funding generally came with strings attached. Whether this was an institutional donor with interest in particular thematic area or a corporate concerned with brand alignment, there was a definite sense that this will be complex ground to navigate. EV4GH values its independence and its ambition to disrupt, something that may be affected by a prescriptive donor relationship. One respondent noted quite a significant variation in ideology across the alumni network in relation to private actors in the global health space and that this ideological variation has implications on who EV4GH could accept funding from. It was felt that whether funding is sought from corporate or private foundations an ideological position on funder acceptability might need to be considered and cemented to support fundraising efforts.

The charts (see Figures 7, 8 and 9), provide a series of results from the survey, reflecting on the appropriateness of funding sources for various component of the programme. These results do not reflect an opinion as to the ease of fundraising, yet gives us some insight into the values framework that respondents may use to assess the acceptability of funding. Despite a very strong set of opinions coming through in the interviews around the ethics of receiving funding from the private sector and some foundations, the results

suggest that the more general perspective tends towards neutrality. It is however a significant ‘policy’ decision that will need to be approached carefully when developing the fundraising strategy.

The results follow an almost identical pattern across all three datasets with the preferred sources of support being selected multilateral and bilateral donors and the least preferred source being the alumni themselves. It is important to note that there is a general sense, from the interviews that a critical factor in selecting funding opportunities is a values alignment with the potential donor. It is interesting also to note that there is a higher acceptability for crowdfunding for the secretariat than there is for the scholarships or the network.

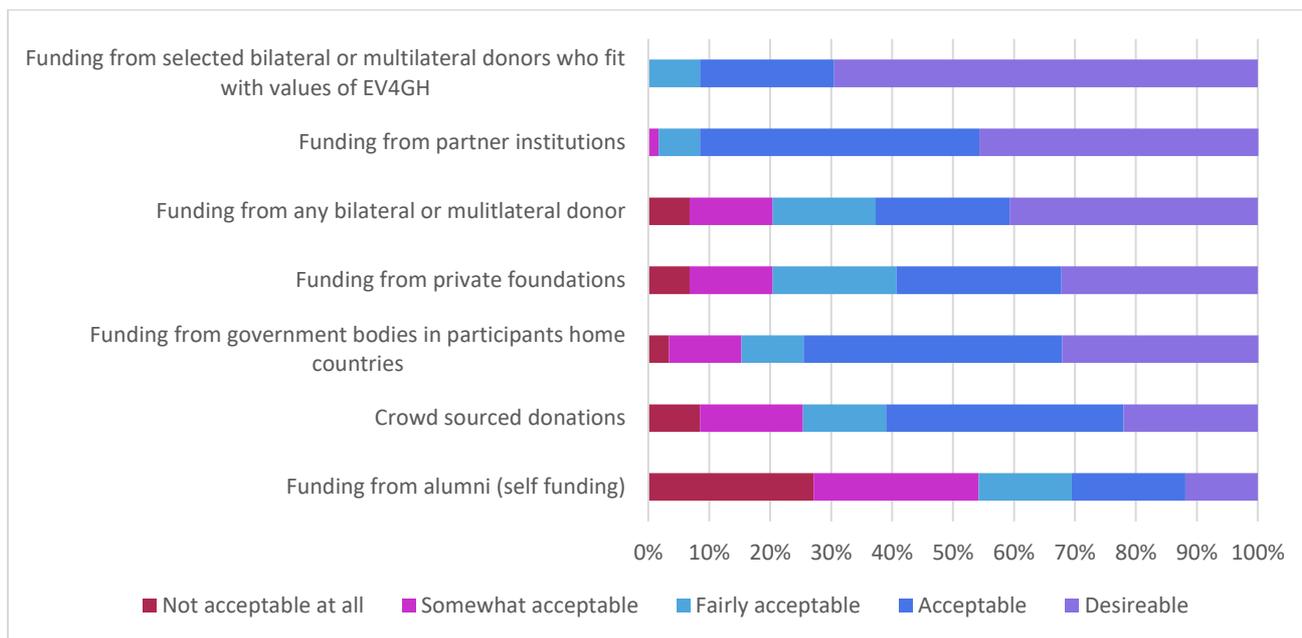


Figure 8 attitudes towards funding sources for the scholarships (n=59)

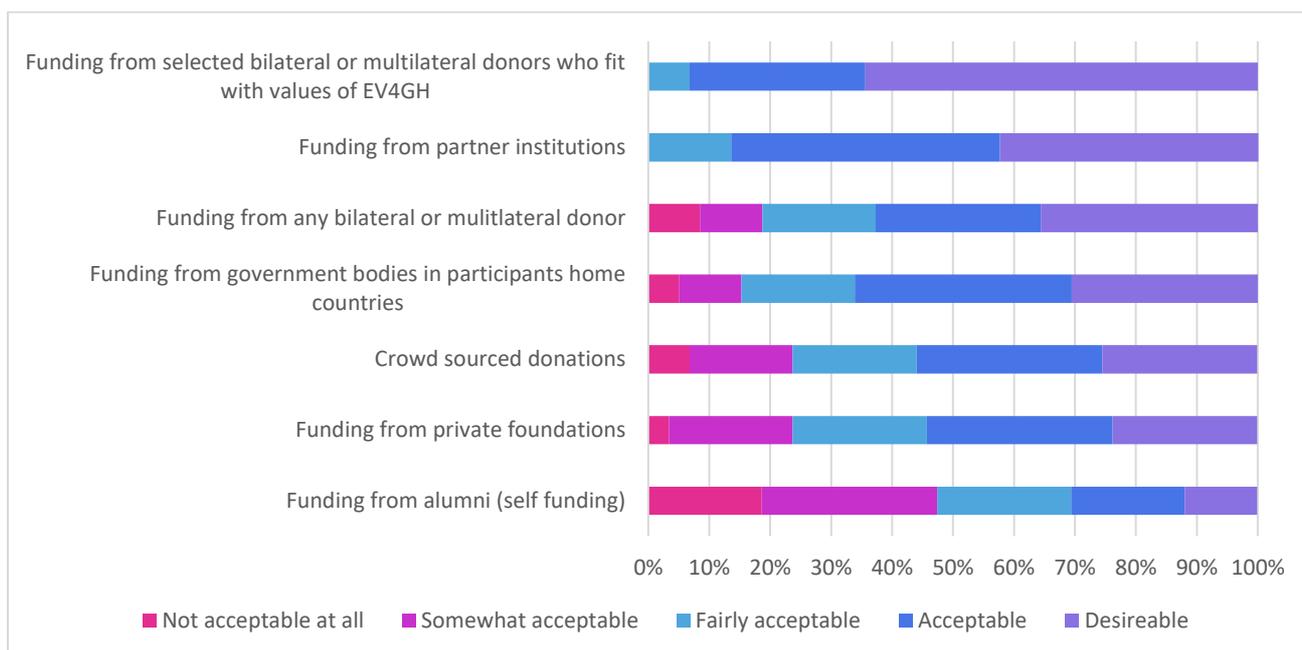


Figure 9 attitudes towards funding sources for the network (n=59)

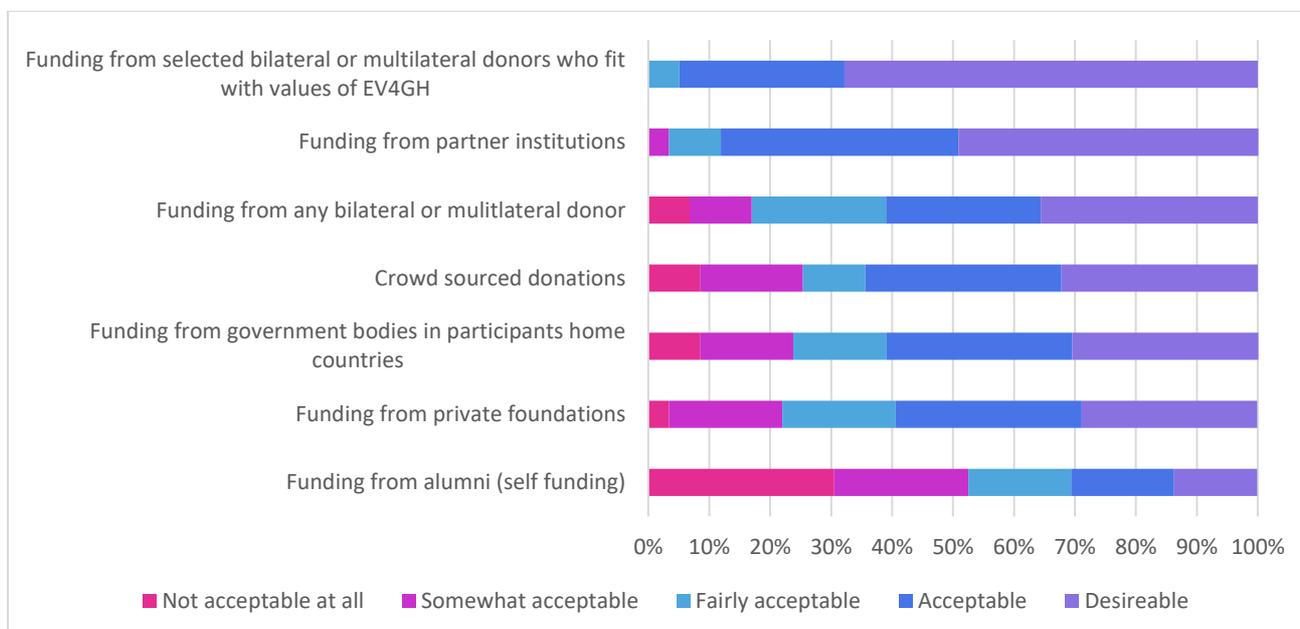


Figure 10 attitudes towards s funding sources for the secretariat (n=59)

A significant, and often noted impediment, to fundraising was the lack of skilled, dedicated capacity for fundraising. This was perhaps the most repeated limitation – that people who were tasked with fundraising had neither the time nor the appropriate skills to fundraise effectively. Many of the people who did attempt to provide support to EV4GH reported limited fundraising experience in the institutional and private sector fundraising space and while they were generally good at accessing grants, it was difficult to translate this experience. This challenge is further compounded by the part time nature of the fundraising and that it is still quite venture focussed.

One respondent noted the potential to leverage partners expertise more, in terms of the knowledge of their local fundraising markets and opportunities as well as in the development of more programmatic offerings. Beyond the venture, the general opinion was that EV4GH still needs to develop and market its ‘products’ more. It was felt though, that with a clearer set of products the timing is right to invest in fundraising, given renewed donor interest in global/public in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

Respondents felt that the fundraising role needed to be better resourced – in terms of time and institutional support. This could, as a few respondents noted, mean that EV4GH would need to employ a fundraiser as part of its core team, and that specific institutional arrangements, both management and governance, needed to be developed to give more impetus to fundraising. Critical to the success of this is clarity in terms of tangible outputs and a more programmatic/project-based offering as well as the scholarships approach.

In relation to potential funding and fundraising partnerships, people noted the need to: form stronger relationships with the broader WHO system given the strong alignment of goals, but also because of the opportunity to influence its policy and programmes through the relationship; focus more on regional and country funding opportunities for scholarships; establish stronger links to the governments of the countries from which alumni were drawn from for scholarships linked to internships; connect to foundations more, particularly those interested in supporting activism and supporting disruptive voices; and, link with donors interested in developing human capital and capacity development in LMICs.

The majority of respondents felt that fundraising was outside of their areas of expertise and a limited number of strategies were proposed. For those who did respond though, it was clear that they felt that fundraising needed to be linked to strategy. A few noted the potential of the network to self-fund as alumni moved into better paid positions. They also acknowledged that this would be supplementary funding at best and

insufficient to support the entire operation of EV4GH. One respondent stated there was potential for EV4GH to seek seed funding to establish a trust and to develop institutional arrangements that would allow the initiative to achieve independence over a three-to-five-year period. Although most respondents felt that the initiative needed to have the support of funding agencies to succeed and sustain.

Questions around whether TWG status with HSG was a constraint or opportunity received a mixed response and is discussed earlier in the report. Most informants felt that the gains of being a TWG outweighed the constraints.

Most informants were satisfied with the funding and institutional arrangements with ITM Antwerp. Although there were a very small number of voices who identified that it might be better to be more independent. There were also voices particularly from within ITM Antwerp who identified that there was no guarantee of sustainability of funding. ITM Antwerp staff were, however, clear that they considered EV4GH an integral part of their programme and that it would be secured in the next DGD funding round. They also expressed the opinion that the initiative is sufficiently resourced to run the training element biennially with a limited number of participants but not to fund other activities that have been suggested. There were indications that the ITM Antwerp budget within which EV4GH is housed could be extended and adapted to better meet the needs of the programme but this would need to be confirmed through engagement with the budget holders.

Overall, there is a sense of optimism for the initiative's ability to sustain itself. While there is a general acknowledgement that it is a difficult fundraising environment, there is a general agreement that EV4GH has the necessary track record and sufficiently demonstrable results to have the potential to attract funding. In order to do this, the initiative informants described the need to 'professionalise' more by recruiting a fundraiser, developing a more detailed strategy and accompanying plans, improving documentation and monitoring and evaluation.

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## Discussion

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Whilst increased funding and diversification of funding may be important for long-term sustainability, at the current time, EV4GH is not well placed to pursue these goals. There is a strategic and skills deficit that needs to be addressed before being able to actively pursue additional funding. In addition, it is recommended that smooth transfer of the secretariat function is a first priority operationally as this presents significant risk to the continuity of the initiative. The pressures on funding for EV4GH are not acute – there is sufficient commitment from ITM Antwerp and resourcing through the DGD grant for the initiative to develop and implement a more medium-term sustainability strategy over this coming five-year implementation phase. It should be explored within ITM Antwerp whether there is any potential to increase funding for investment in professional skills in fundraising that would help develop a more diverse and sustainable funding strategy and solution in the medium term.

There is no doubt that the initiative is an attractive offering to potential supporters and donors. There is, however, no clear strategy on how to market EV4GH beyond its current narrow field of exposure. In order to be able to better exploit new funding opportunities and consolidate existing relationships, the initiative will need to define its offering better and develop a clear sense of its strategic direction and value proposition. There is a clear need to better describe the outcomes of the training programme in a manner that speaks to potential donors – emphasising the capacity building contributions to leadership development and personal growth, increasing the visibility and active participation of global health practitioners from the global south, shaping the issues in the global health conferencing space, contributing to the strengthening of national health systems and, highlighting the growing prominence and influence of EV4GH alumni in global health and national policy making. EV4GH needs a clear programme strategy to guide its sustainability.

There is a clear skills gap that needs to be filled. While volunteer contributions in this area have been welcomed, it is clear that volunteers do not have the time or the skillsets to undertake fundraising effectively. A number of potential strategies for fundraising present to EV4GH, all of which require some time investment to flesh out so that decisions can be taken about which of these to pursue. Among those proposed are: increasing the fundraising focus on the countries and regions from which EVs are drawn; assessing alumni contribution models; targeted private sector strategies; fundraising around specific programmes e.g. documenting COVID-19 responses; and, developing specific alumni driven publications or initiatives.

A notable gap in the formulation of a comprehensive strategy is incomplete financial modelling. The initiative operates on a significant voluntary contribution, the value/cost of which is not reflected in its budgets. There is a need to develop an accurate cost model to support fundraising. While voluntary contributions are valuable and offset running costs, these need to be accounted for. This is especially important when considering how EV4GH might formalise its fundraising function. It is clear that dedicated time and resources will need to be made available to support the implementation of any sustainability strategy. While this could take the form of a consultancy or a dedicated role in the management structure of EV4GH it will still need to be accurately costed and its scope described.

One area that may need to be explored is building a reserve fund for the initiative. This would allow additional flexibility and provide resourcing for hard to fund activities, for example controversial campaigns and subsidising some operational costs. Given the complexity of the funding to which EV4GH has to respond (ITM Antwerp, HSG and the secretariat institution) this may not be allowable. It is however an important consideration for the sustainability of the initiative.

A further area of consideration, given donor potential to influence programming, is how to resource collective advocacy/influencing work? While there are some funders who would be interested on this kind of work, there may be instances where the initiative will need to consider self-funding because the network challenges prevailing norms and generally accepted practice or when the ideological position of the network makes collaborations difficult e.g. the role of private entities in the resourcing and potential profiteering in the delivery of public goods.

Linked to the above is the potential for the network itself to finance specific posts in order to improve the overall functioning of the initiative. While the overall financing of the initiative through a self-funded model is too much to ask, there does seem to be potential for the network to support a critical post in the secretariat and/or provide for some of the operating costs of the initiative. The growth of the direct giving market has meant that there are several platforms that could be explored to support this form of fundraising. These platforms are usually quite cheap requiring no upfront fees, simply levying a transaction fee or taking a percentage of funds raised. It is recommended that any self-funding model is on the basis of voluntary contributions and not membership fees, where the administration costs often negate the value of their collection.

Alumni, partner institutions, and the secretariat provide valuable connections into the broader fundraising space and mechanisms will need to be developed to access their knowledge and networks of potential supporters. Again, once there is clarity of what EV4GH is looking to resource strategically and what its operating/ideological limitations are, it could very easily tap into this network for donor intelligence, introductions and local engagement and support with potential supporters. All of these possibilities will require that EV4GH work with both HSG and ITM Antwerp to establish what is possible within the broader policy and operating frameworks of the institutions that the initiative works with and in. This is not simply a matter of developing strategy, rather it will require that multiple stakeholders be engaged and worked with develop and assess options, to make choices and agree on how these projects be resourced.

## Recommendations

1. Recruit a fundraiser.
2. Develop a detailed financial model – including the monetary value of the volunteering and hidden subsidies e.g. HSG membership fees
3. Develop fundraising strategy, aligned to the strategy (including a donor database and communications plan)
4. Explore the possibility of setting up and building a reserve fund
5. Explore the possibility of crowdfunding to resource components of the programme
6. Assess alumni's appetite to make voluntary contributions towards EV4GH

Perception of the potential advantages and disadvantages of selecting participants from specific institutions to gain critical mass

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This section explores the assumption **[A41]** that **participants benefit from the programme whether or not there are other alumni within their institution.**

Critical mass is an area that has been highlighted as needing to be developed in terms of research teams within LMICs particularly in new areas of research such as health policy and systems research

Many alumni saw the potential benefits of building critical mass in that it:

- has the potential to bring institutions on board into the network not just individuals, thereby expanding and consolidating the network and strengthening institutional links;
- addresses the difficulty of creating change if you are a single voice in an institution giving greater potential to create stronger policy influencing centres.
- builds critical consciousness;
- provides impetus to the network as participants and alumni would already know each other making it easier to build on existing relationships; and
- builds potential to strengthen institutions

However, they also identified a number of disadvantages or threats in that this may result in:

- the programme becoming elitist;
- benefit not accruing to less strong institutions – that there is a continual strengthening of already strong institutions;
- less variety and diversity in the network which reduces its value;
- a move away from the purpose to promote voices from the global south; and
- loss of the broad reach of the training;

Respondents reflected on the fact that EV4GH is about strengthening individuals, not institutions and would therefore need a different focus and skillset; that this might be too ambitious a strategy in that EV4GH lacked the capacity to strengthen institutions, and that it will require more funding than was available. Another concern, linked to the risk of elitism, is that this approach might give rise to inequity, with a bias towards more elite institutions. Lastly, informants expressed concerns that mobility in the sector might mean that critical mass at one institution might never be achieved.

There are some institutions that do have multiple alumni some of which are previous co-hosts. Informants identified that these were not weak institutions that needed the building of critical mass. Informants felt it was important that the initiative should not seek to build capacity where it already exists eg institutions in the global north. One informant acknowledged that there were institutions with a need to develop critical mass but thought that EV4GH's role was to support isolated researchers through the power of the network not through institutional strengthening, while another identified that critical mass will naturally occur in some

institutions as alumni support new applicants. Overall, even amongst those informants who identified merit in the idea of critical mass the reality of having to select an extremely small number of institutions to focus on made it an undesirable option amongst all stakeholders.

*Critical mass... I feel like we have that now. Within our institution and our partners (Global Northern Institution) there are quite a lot of us who have been EVs .... This is at loggerheads with the aim of the EV4GH programme and decolonisation. [Alumni 2016]*

*If we have partner institutions that we partner with in LIC then we will be inequitably building capacity in those institutions. [Alumni 2014]*

*None of the institutions are big enough to build critical mass ... They become powerful when they are connected and connected to the big society. ... it is the connections that are important. So it has to be HSG because that is where we all connect. [Partner staff]*

*What is their [EV4GH] role? It might be about being a global network which is not then institutional development. But they still need connections to institutions, but it does not require institutional support per se. The global network may be the particular role of the EV programme. No one initiative by itself is the catalyst of the change needed. [Partner staff]*

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## Discussion

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**Would sustainability be increased if more EV participants were selected from partner institutes (or some EVs in different cohorts) from the same institutes, instead of largely going for individual applications? What are the pros and cons?**

The evaluators would agree with the viewpoints stated by informants that institutional strengthening is not the remit of EV4GH, and it should seek to continue to support isolated researchers or activists through the network. The negative perceptions of choosing a small number of institutions to focus scholarships on when there is already so much unmet demand, would potentially undermine the integrity of the programme. Not to mention the difficulty of making such a choice of which institutions to focus on.

There are signs that there are some institutions that are naturally building critical mass of alumni, however, as noted by the informants these are not usually weaker institutions but ones that already have strong ties to EV4GH for example, through being co-hosts or in some cases as long term partners of ITM Antwerp. Alumni support new applicants to put together strong applications and the ethos of EV4GH already permeates the department from which they are applying.

As a long-term goal building critical mass could be linked to the regionalisation agenda and a longer-term vision involving significant fund raising. However, it may require a finer gradation than the current WHO regions which are also so large as to make focusing on particular institutions very difficult decisions.

### Recommendations

1. Retain focus on individual applications and individual capacity strengthening

### Good practices

1. Existing alumni supporting new applicants to apply.

## Conclusion

EV4GH is an exceptional capacity strengthening programme which purposively selects participants mostly from the global south who have a commitment to social justice and the potential to have influence and impact in the field of health systems and policy. It is a unique training experience in the health systems and policy field with its focus on communication skills, current debates, equity and its link to a prestigious global conference where participants can immediately put the skills they have learned to use.

Participants form strong bonds which become diverse international networks that they leverage for support throughout the careers. The network provides alumni with a constant stream of information and opportunities allowing them to keep at the cutting edge in their professional lives. The network also provides opportunities for alumni to take control of the initiative and learn new skills through roles on the Board, taskforces or as facilitators of the training for future cohorts. This further strengthens their skills and their networks. Alumni passion for the initiative is demonstrated by the way they have taken over much of the running of the initiative and hence it becoming alumni and southern-led.

The diversity of the participants on the course enables deep learning about the different contexts, problems, and solutions that global health professionals operate in. It creates a motivation to create impact and to have voices heard. The training encourages participants to be critical and to speak truth to power. Attitudes that many alumni take with them wherever their career pathways take them. EV4GH produces alumni who take their communication and their critical lens into their careers making them more effective in influencing change. Alumni have both loud voices in the sector and quiet influence. They are working in roles with leadership potential or are already exerting leadership in national, regional and international roles. Many are working within academia but have a changed commitment to how they do research through their involvement in EV4GH. Many are taking leadership positions in HSG. For those who are still starting on their careers in academia many face similar problems of having enough research time, support systems, and being reliant on project funding. Hence there is an opportunity for EV4GH to be a voice for ways in which ECR can be supported in academic institutions particularly in the global south.

EV4GH has had a lasting impact on the HSG conference which now has youth voices embedded throughout the conference and has adopted many innovative formats within the conference. EV4GH alumni are at the forefront of some of the challenging discourse in terms of gender, decolonisation and planetary health. They have benefited from close relationships with publishing platforms such as the IHP Newsletter and BMJ GH. But in terms of the bigger aims of changing discourse, being disruptively constructive then more collaborative/collective action may be needed.

Despite its success there are areas where there are widely held views that there is unmet potential within the network or operational issues that need to be addressed. One of the key recommendations of this report is that EV4GH have a facilitated strategic review process in order to make some decisions in relation to its strategic direction. There are many options and potentials that the network could meet but with limited resources it is important to focus on only a small number of things in order to be able to deliver on them. But it is clear that there is an appetite for more collective action and potential to do more between the training ventures. There are some specific recommendations in this report on how the network might move these areas forward.

There is also a need to transfer the secretariat and this is an opportunity to review the staffing needs of the initiative. There is a gap in fundraising capacity and whilst the staffing of the secretariat is sufficient to deliver the venture (with additional flex from within the host institution) it will not necessarily be sufficient to deliver the new strategic goals decided within the review. Hence it is advised that the secretariat is expanded but the exact roles should not be fully decided until after the strategic review in order to match operational capacity to strategic needs. But it is clear that there is a need to develop fundraising capacity within the initiative and

this should be a focus for investment in order to develop sustainability and a more diverse funding base in the medium term.

EV4GH is an impressive initiative but it is time for the next step in order both to underpin sustainability and to unleash its transformative potential.

The key strategic recommendations are presented below, a full list of recommendations under these strategic recommendations is presented in Annex 1.

### **Strategic Recommendations**

1. Commission the facilitated development of a ten-year strategic plan, detailed financial model and associated fundraising strategy
2. Strengthen initiative monitoring and evaluation
3. Develop a partnership strategy that differentiates the types of partners and highlights their added value
4. Restructure the board, secretariat and taskforces to create more delineation between operational and strategic roles
5. Expand the volunteer base and consider a limited incentives and awards scheme within available resources
6. Make strategic decisions about criteria for EV4GH recruitment in relation to diversities
7. Choose one or two core focal areas and one biennial topic to harness a collective EV4GH voice
8. Recognise that influence through activism and advocacy is understood in different ways and encourage EVs to use these different models to have an impact
9. Launch a quarterly webinar series to promote cross-cohort interaction, career advice, skills sharing and collaborative action
10. Focus on innovation in online and face to face learning communities, both for the venture and the network
11. Engage with HSG to better understand how HSG and EV4GH can complement their evolving strategic thinking including regionalisation

### **Next Steps**

1. Management response to the evaluation report, using the list of recommendations in Annex 1.
2. Review opportunities to include recommendations and any associated budgetary items into the new proposal to DGD via ITM Antwerp including funding for a facilitated strategic review process.
3. Facilitated strategic review process
4. Operational alignment (eg taskforce structure) with strategic review.

## Output 3 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

M&E within the EV4GH programme has been weak. An M&E framework with a small set of strategic indicators will help the EV4GH governance team and secretariat to monitor the programme against its purpose:

- for strategic oversight
- to highlight achievements
- to help attract additional funding

Indicators should ideally be a combination of process, output and outcome indicators.

**Process indicators:** to check that processes happen as they should

**Output indicators:** to monitor activities and their expected outputs

**Outcome indicators:** to check that what is happening has the effect expected.

Some indicators may need to be stratified for example participants in the venture should be broken down by gender, type (research, activist, policy maker, other), country of origin, first language, country of residence, type of institution.

Some indicators should be analysed as trends in relation to strategic goals set. For example, the proportion of women increasing or decreasing over time? Are the indicators for quality of the virtual and face to face training delivery improving or declining over time?

This list of indicators provided is a pick list – the initiative may decide not to monitor all the indicators or to start with a small group and gradually increase. It is a starting point, and needs further work and discussion both strategically and operationally. If EV4GH decides to conduct a strategic review, then the key indicators should align with the strategic objectives of the plan.

Operationally it is important to design simple processes and tools for the collection, analysis and reporting of indicators. Ideally this data should be recorded, analysed and reported in the same software, for example Excel or Google Sheets, to avoid multiple processes.

Each venture should assess the quality of the learning experience at the end of the virtual and face to face sessions using an anonymised participant survey with a small number of open and closed questions. Ideally the closed questions should remain consistent between ventures to be able to compare quality ratings over time.

There are a number of proposed surveys in the pick list of indicators. A survey focused on self-assessment of skills and attitudes but also with metrics relating to publications that is administered pre, post and one year post the venture would enable collection of useful metrics to demonstrate outcomes of the training on skills, attitudes, and publishing behaviour. Again it is good to design surveys and then keep consistency in their use over time to allow comparisons.

Influence case studies could also be developed around collective voice or collaborative projects to demonstrate the synergies achieved. These are best done as narrative descriptions and should be one of the required outputs of any collaborative project/group. There are resources on how to develop impact case studies in relation to research programmes within UK academia as it is a requirement for government funding: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2018/12/10/the-a-to-z-of-writing-an-impact-case-study/>

The picklist below provides example indicators only. The governance team should select a feasible set of key performance indicators to help them with strategic oversight, to capture achievements and help put together a case to funders to attract additional funds.

### Example Process Indicators

Ref	Indicator	Collection Method	Stratification	Trends
P01	Number of reviewers	Secretariat	Alumni/Partner	Yes
P02	Number of applications/Number of reviewers	Secretariat		Yes
P03	Days between application deadline and decision emails being sent	Secretariat		Yes
P03	Average days before venture joining instructions sent to participants	Secretariat		Yes
P04	Percentage of participants receiving feedback by deadline/after deadline per submitted work	Lead Facilitator	Facilitator	Benchmark
P05	Number of governors	Secretariat	Cohort Region Based in LMIC/HIC	Yes
P06	Number of quorate governance meetings per year	Secretariat		Yes
P07	Percentage of annual governance tasks completed/underway/overdue/pending	Governing Board		
P08	Number of taskforce members (annual)	Secretariat	For each taskforce	Yes
P09	Number of taskforce quorate meetings per year	Taskforce		
P10	Percentage of annual taskforce tasks completed/underway/overdue/pending	Taskforce	For each taskforce	
P11	Percentage of alumni voting in elections	Secretariat		Yes
P12	Percentage of directory entries for alumni on website updated	Secretariat		

### Example Output Indicators

Ref	Indicator	Collection Method	Stratification	Trends
T01	Number of applications received / venture	Secretariat	<b>Gender</b> <b>Country of origin</b> <b>Country of residence</b> <b>Track</b> <b>Academic status</b> eg PhD candidate, PhD, Masters, Post Doc etc.. <b>Institution Type</b> LMIC Academic HIC Academic NGO/INGO Government Etc... <b>Age Range</b> <b>Language</b>	Yes
T02	Number of successful participants / cohort	Secretariat	<b>As above</b>	Yes
T03	Value of scholarships secured	ITM Antwerp	<b>Funder</b> <b>Funder type</b> <b>Unconditional/Conditional</b>	Yes
T04	Quality of the learning experience – (virtual programme) - Likert scales for each element of the programme (but not each session) - Likert scales for useability of the platform	Survey	<b>By type of session</b> <b>Useability of platform</b>	Yes

Ref	Indicator	Collection Method	Stratification	Trends
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Likert scales for feedback received from facilitators</li> <li>- Open questions for best elements of the programme and recommendations for improvement</li> </ul>			
<b>T05</b>	Quality of the learning experience – (face to face programme and pre-conference) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Likert scales for each element of the programme (but not each session)</li> <li>- Likert scales for logistical arrangements</li> <li>- Likert scales for feedback received from facilitators</li> <li>- Open questions for best elements of the programme and recommendations for improvement</li> </ul>	Survey	<b>By type of session</b>	Yes
<b>T06</b>	Number of alumni	Secretariat	<b>Gender</b> <b>Country of origin</b> <b>Country of residence</b> <b>Institution Type</b> LMIC Academic HIC Academic NGO/INGO Government Etc... <b>Language</b> <b>Cohort</b>	Yes
<b>T07</b>	Number of subscribers to Google Group	Secretariat/ITM Antwerp	<b>Alumni/Other</b>	Yes
<b>T08</b>	Number of virtual alumni meetings held/year	Secretariat		Yes
<b>T09</b>	Participants/virtual meeting	Secretariat	<b>Summarise annually</b>	Yes
<b>T10</b>	Usefulness of virtual meeting/meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Likert scale on usefulness</li> </ul>	In meeting survey	<b>Summarise annually</b>	Yes
<b>T11</b>	Collective voice theme outputs/theme	Secretariat	<b>Type:</b> Article/op ed/blog/policy brief etc... <b>Platform</b>	Yes
<b>T12</b>	Twitter followers (max in year)	Secretariat	<b>Region</b>	Yes
<b>T13</b>	Twitter interactions (average per month reported annually)	Secretariat	<b>Choose indicator and reporting tool</b> <b>Eg Retweets, Replies etc..</b>	Yes
<b>T14</b>	Website unique views / key pages (average monthly views reported annually)	Secretariat	<b>Region</b>	Yes
<b>T15</b>	EV4GH led sessions at HSRS	Secretariat	<b>Type of session:</b> panel, skills workshop, business lunch etc.	Yes
<b>T16</b>	EV4GH presentations at HSRS	Secretariat	<b>Cohort</b> <b>Alumni/Participant</b> <b>Oral/Poster/Other</b>	Yes

### Example Outcome Indicators

Ref	Indicator	Collection Method	Stratification	Trends
<b>C01</b>	Skills and attitude change questionnaire current cohort (administer three times for each cohort) Also include publications in the last year (first/contributing), blogs in the last year.  Statements on level of activeness on social media	Survey	Prior to venture Post venture One year post venture	
<b>C02</b>	Achievements and influence questionnaire All alumni (administer once every two years) - Series of statements/likert scales to understand degree of influence - Series of statements/likert scales in terms of visibility - Series of statements/likert scales on publications - Series of true/false statements on degree of collaborative action taken Space for people to list key achievements	Survey	Cohort LMIC/HIC origin LMIC/HIC base	Yes
<b>C03</b>	Individual case studies	ITM Antwerp /EV4GH internship		
<b>C04</b>	Collective influence case studies	Focal area groups		

## ANNEX 1: CONSULTANCY TEAM

**ALLAN MOOLMAN** is an experienced development practitioner with broad thematic and operational experience derived from more than 20 years of work in a number of community-based, national and international civil society organisations. He has extensive programme design and management experience in programmes in South and East Africa and project work in South East Asia and the Pacific. He has been responsible for fundraising for several multi-million-dollar projects and, in his consulting practice, has worked to support a number of large philanthropic organisations and supported civil society organisations to develop and implement fundraising strategies. He has also worked extensively in the design and delivery of organisational development and capacity strengthening programmes and one-to-one support to early career and experienced development professionals. Email: [allanmoolman@gmail.com](mailto:allanmoolman@gmail.com)

**DR VICKI DOYLE** is a UK-based health development professional, with more than 25 years' experience of working in research, education, management and consultancy. She has designed, delivered and evaluated health projects and programmes for community, district, regional and national health systems in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America working with government, UN agencies, global health partnerships, research institutions, consultancy companies and NGOs. Her research and consultancy work in health systems strengthening, quality improvement in health care, strategic planning, capacity development and evaluation has resulted in contributing to global guidance and national strategy documents, policy briefs, training manuals, book chapters and journal articles. Email: [vdoyle@capacity-development.com](mailto:vdoyle@capacity-development.com)

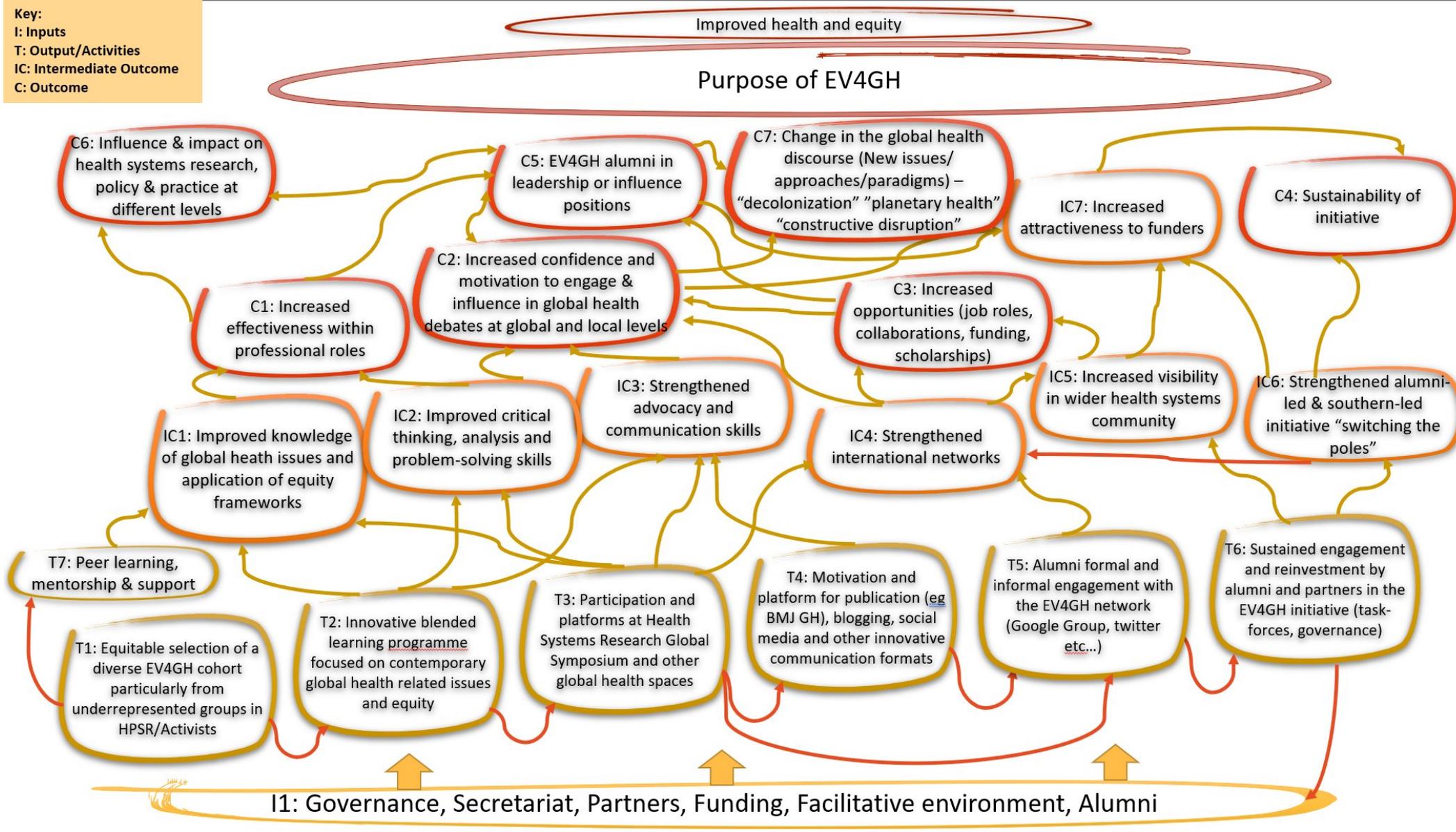
**EMA KELLY** is an international health consultant with 25 years' experience working in public and global health. In the last eight years she has focused on developing and implementing complex evaluations, strategy, toolkits, resources, research and development proposals and think pieces for a wide range of research, development and humanitarian actors. Her ability to think conceptually and use systems thinking to understand the interactions between the technical and management aspects of organisations and programmes has resulted in unique contributions to the design of robust organisational strategies and evaluations. Email: [ekelly@capacity-development.com](mailto:ekelly@capacity-development.com)

## ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Budget - Emerging Voices 2021 Dubai
2. Budget - Emerging Voices Secretariat 2020
3. Deepika Saluja, Presentation at EV4GH ToC Workshop, 2020
4. EV 2020 Fundraising letter to partner institutions, Peking University
5. EV4GH in Times of Transition: Taking Stock & Looking Ahead to the Future, ppt, Business Lunch 2021
6. EV Collective Reflection (2016-18) (ppt presentation) by Raoul A. Bermejo III, Sara Ardila
7. EV4GH Website
8. EV4GH 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Digital Magazine
9. EV2020 training platform access
10. Francisco Oviedo EV4GH Journey Presentation for Evaluation Theory of Change Workshop
11. HSG TWG Annual Plan - Emerging Voices for Global Health (Jan - Dec 2020)
12. HSG TWG Annual Report - Emerging Voices for Global Health (2019)
13. Information Sheet - EV 2012 Practicalities
14. Instructions for Track 1 Reviewers - EV2020
15. Instructions for Track 2 Reviewers - EV2020
16. List - Facilitators Emerging Voices 2020
17. List - Task Force Membership Emerging Voices 2020
18. Meeting Minutes Sample - Meeting Held on 28 July 2020
19. Previous calls for EV4GH (2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2020)
20. Previous calls for EV Residency (2010-16, 2019)
21. Previous evaluations/reflections of EV4GH (2010, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018)
22. Report - Selection of Candidates for EV2020
23. Shakira Choonara presentation to EV4GH ToC Workshop, 2020
24. Srinivas PN, Henriksson DK, S Gordeev V, et al. "Together we move a mountain": celebrating a decade of the Emerging Voices for Global Health network. *BMJ Global Health* 2020;**5**:e003015. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2020-003015
25. Terms of Reference EV Secretariat
26. Terms of Reference EV Taskforces 2020
27. Terms of Reference for Governance Board Members
28. Timeline - Emerging Voices 2020
29. Theories of Change Emerging Voices 2010-2014 ... and beyond (ppt presentation), by Sara Van Belle and Kristof Decoster

**ANNEX 3: THEORY OF CHANGE AND ASSUMPTIONS TABLE**

**Key:**  
**I:** Inputs  
**T:** Output/Activities  
**IC:** Intermediate Outcome  
**C:** Outcome



Assumptions (changes made as a result of data highlighted in red)	ToC Ref(s)	Evaluation Questions from ToR <sup>10</sup>
<b>Foundations</b>		
A1. Sufficient volunteers to operationalise the initiative	F1	
A2. Volunteers have resources/time/skills to operationalise the initiative	F1	Ef2
A3. There are sufficient funds to resource the initiative.	F1	
A4. An effective and efficient secretariat function.	F1	Ef2
A5. Sufficient resources for the secretariat function.	F1	
A6. Sufficient resources for the initiative (including meeting increasing demand for places on the biennial venture).	F1	
A7. Partners actively engage in the initiative and leverage resources.	F1	R5
A8. EV4GH is integrated with other projects at ITM Antwerp	F1	C1a
A9. The governance of the initiative is enabled to be and is alumni-led with leadership from the global south.	F1	
A10. The governance structure is fit for purpose.	F1	Ef3
A11. The governance structure and secretariat work efficiently and effectively together.	F1	Ef3
<b>Outputs/Activities</b>		

<sup>10</sup> ToR references give the initial letter of the heading under III.4.2 on pages 16 and 17 and then the question number eg the first question under Relevance would be R1, the first question under Effectiveness would be Et1, first question under Efficiency would be Ef1.

Assumptions (changes made as a result of data highlighted in red)	ToC Ref(s)	Evaluation Questions from ToR <sup>10</sup>
A12. EV4GH calls reach a diversity of potential candidates including underrepresented groups (geographical, language, gender, socio-economic status)	T1	R4b, Et5
A13. There is a good balance between research and activist track participants within the cohorts in the selection process.	T1	R4a
<del>A14. Selection processes ensure both diversity but also representation of underrepresented groups.</del>	T1	
A14. Students engage with all elements of the blended learning programme.	T2	
A15. The learning meets the needs of the participants (network and learning programme).	T2	R1, R3
A16. Learning materials are updated to remain current and learning techniques updated to remain innovative.	T2	R1
A17. Access to leading teachers and influencers within the learning programme.	T2	
A18. Monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of and improve on selection, the learning programme and engagement of alumni.	T2, T3, T4, T5, IC1, IC2, IC3, IC4, IC5	
A19. HSG facilitates access to and platforms at the conference for EV4GH eg through being a TWG.	T3	C2c
A20. EV4GH participants actively engage in the HSR conference events and networking opportunities.	T3	
A21. HSG values EV4GH contributions to the conference.	T3	Et3
A22. EV4GH participants/alumni receive sufficient encouragement and mentorship to produce quality written outputs	T4	
A23. Alumni are motivated to engage with the network after their completion of the venture.	T5	Et1
A24. The network aspect (in particular in years between HSR conferences) is sufficiently resourced	T5	Ef1
A25. The network meets the needs of alumni and uses appropriate channels.	T5	Et2a, Ef1

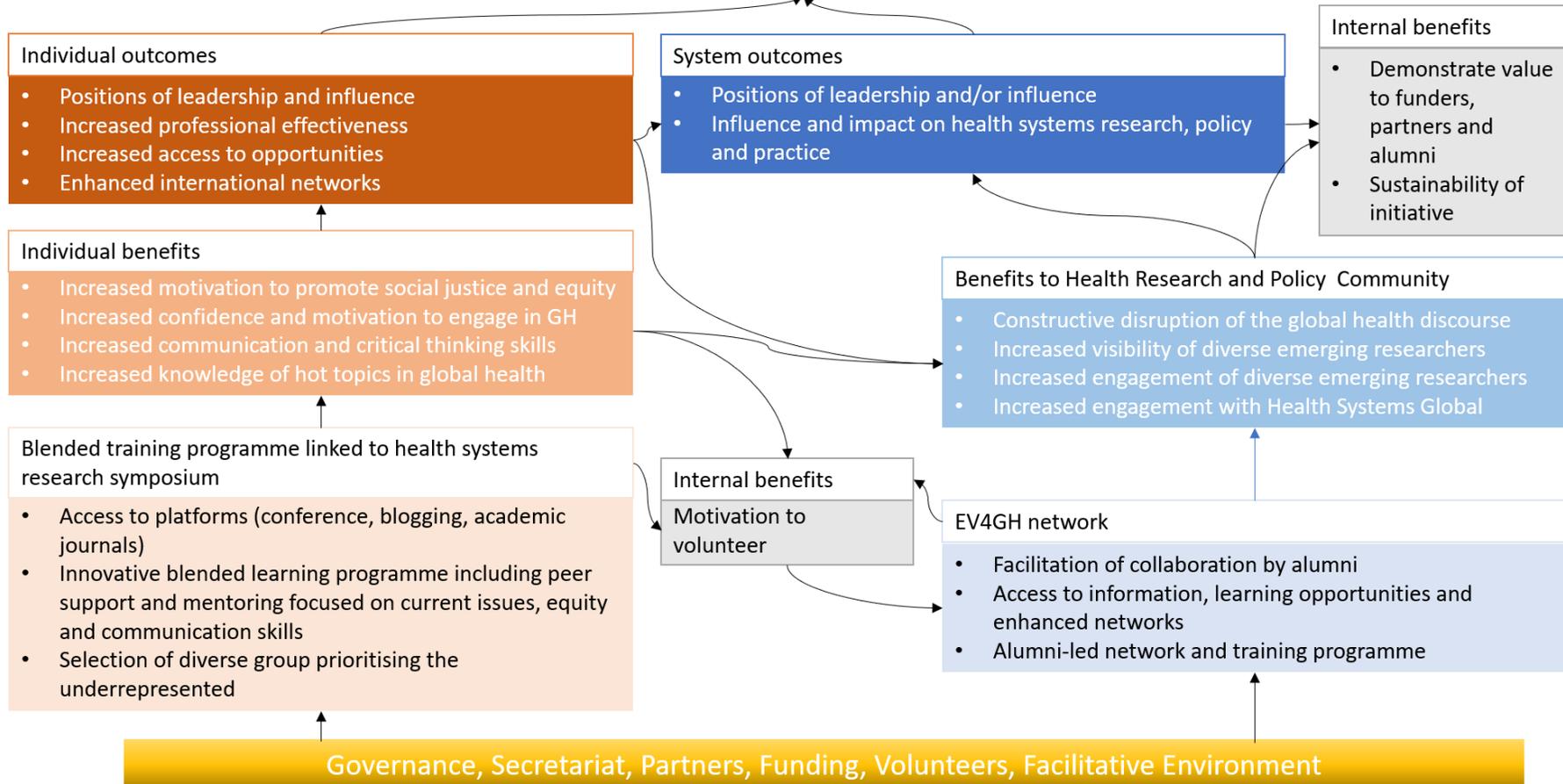
Assumptions (changes made as a result of data highlighted in red)	ToC Ref(s)	Evaluation Questions from ToR <sup>10</sup>
A26. Sufficient alumni to drive the initiative forward are motivated to reinvest in the initiative.	T6	
A27. Participants in the biennial venture are motivated to share learning and support each other.	T7	
A46. The regional hubs are active and meet the need of regional alumni	T5	
Intermediate Outcomes		
A28. There is a mix of capacity strengthening activities leading to improved knowledge and skills (including coaching, mentoring).	IC1, IC2, IC3	
A29. Appropriate platforms are available and capitalised on by EV4GH and alumni.	IC5	
A30. EV4GH accesses and promotes success stories from alumni.	IC5	
A31. EV4GH brand is recognised with the GH community and is used by alumni.	IC5	
A32. Aims of EV4GH are attractive to funders.	IC7	
Outcomes		
A33. Alumni capitalise on networks and opportunities.	C5, C2	
A34. Alumni have the opportunity to put the skills and knowledge they gain into practice	C1, C2	
A35. Increased visibility particularly for underrepresented groups (geographical “switching the poles”, language, gender)	C2	R2
A36. EV4GH’s focus on health policy and systems research facilitates increased influence within global health debates and discussions.	C2	C2b
A37. EV4GH members and partners circulate opportunities to alumni.	C3	

Assumptions (changes made as a result of data highlighted in red)	ToC Ref(s)	Evaluation Questions from ToR <sup>10</sup>
A38. The network is able to keep in touch with alumni	C3, T5, T6	
A39. Effective fundraising strategy is in place including targeting a diversity of funding.	C4	S4, S5
A40. Benefits of participation in the EV4GH initiative has lasting impact.	C6	
A41. Participants benefit from the programme whether or not there are other alumni within their institution (however benefits may differ)	C6	
Purpose		
A42. There is alignment with ITM Antwerp policies (“switching the poles”, “decolonise global health”)	Purpose	C1b
A43. There is alignment of EV4GH within the global health community.	Purpose	C2a
A44. EV4GH has a niche within the global health community.	Purpose	C2a
A45. EV4GH should be both a training programme and a network	Purpose	

## ANNEX 4: EXTERNALLY FACING THEORY OF CHANGE

EV4GH

EV4GH catalyses and empowers voices of emerging health systems research leaders, activists and other change makers with the capabilities to challenge and address current and future health systems and policy issues at all levels with an equity lens. We connect diverse voices through: an innovative, nurturing programme of blended learning and peer support; exposure to the global health systems community; providing the space for collaboration and continued contribution to the EV4GH alumni-led network.



## ANNEX 5: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

### Evaluation Framework

Ref	Indicator	Evaluation Qns. (ToR)	ToC Ref	Interviews	Esurvey	Doc Review	Prior Evals.
<b>RELEVANCE</b>							
IR.01	Perception of how aligned EV4GH is with the needs of its beneficiaries (global health researchers and activists).	R3	A15, Purpose	Yes			
IR.02	Perception of whether EV4GH is an innovative format.	R1	A16, T02	Yes		Yes	
IR.03	Alignment with good practices in capacity and leadership development		T02, A28			Yes	Yes
IR.04	Alignment of inputs and activities with the ToC and purpose of the initiative.		All			Yes	
IR.05	Perception of importance of EV4GH as a network as well as a training programme	Et2a	A43	Yes	Yes		
<b>COHERENCE</b>							
IC.01	Perception of integration of EV4GH with other projects at ITM Antwerp	C1a	A08	Yes			
IC.02	Perception of how well EV4GH aligns with ITM Antwerp policies eg "Switching the Poles"	C1b	A42	Yes			
IC.03	Perceptions of the niche of EV4GH within the global health systems research and/or activist community.		A43, Purpose	Yes		Yes	
IC.04	Perception of the degree to which the purpose of EV4GH is aligned with partner institutions		A44	Yes			
IC.05	Perception of the degree to which EV4GH and HSG have a mutually beneficial relationship	C2a, C3c, Et3	A19, A21	Yes			
<b>EFFECTIVENESS</b>							
IEt.01	Perception of whether EV4GH enables calls to reach underrepresented groups (geographical, language, gender)	R4b, Et5	A12	Yes			
IEt.02	Percentage of applicants and participants from underrepresented groups (geographical, language, gender) - analysis from different cohorts.	R4b, Et5	T01			Yes	Yes
IEt.03	Perception of whether EV4GH cohorts are diverse (geographically, gender, language, research/activist) and what alumni gain from having diverse cohorts		T01, A13	Yes			
IEt.04	Analysis of selection processes and how they select for diversity among underrepresented groups and researchers/activists	Et5, R4, R4a	T01, A12, A13	Yes		Yes	

Ref	Indicator	Evaluation Qns. (ToR)	ToC Ref	Interviews	Esurvey	Doc Review	Prior Evals.
IEt.05	Perception of the quality of the blended learning offered by EV4GH	R3	T02, A14, A17, A28		Yes		Yes
IEt.06	Perception of the experience and benefit of participating in the Health Systems Research Global Symposium and/or other global health spaces as part of EV4GH		T03, A20	Yes	Yes		
IEt.07	Perception of the opportunities provided through EV4GH for participants to publish, blog or utilise other innovative communication formats		T04, A22, A29	Yes	Yes	Yes	
IEt.08	Perception of the level of engagement of alumni with the network (Google Group, regional hubs, social media, informal connections)	Et2	T05, A23, A25, A38	Yes	Yes		
IEt.09	Perception of whether there is sufficient reinvestment by alumni and associated enablers and barriers	Et1	T06, A26	Yes	Yes		
IEt.10	Proportion of Alumni who are initially active, less active or remain active [esurvey respondents]	Et1	T05, T06		Yes		
IEt.11	Perception of the effectiveness of the mentorship and support provided by peers, facilitators and within the network		T07, A27	Yes			
IEt.12	Perception of improvement in skills gained through participation in the EV4GH programme		IC1, IC2, IC3, A34	Yes	Yes		Yes
IEt.13	Perception of the degree to which participation in EV4GH has strengthened international networks of participants		IC4, A33	Yes	Yes		
IEt.14	Perception of the degree to which alumni have increased visibility in the wider health systems community as a result of participation		IC5, A30, A31, A35	Yes	Yes		
IEt.15	Perception of the extent to which the initiative is alumni-led and southern-led		IC6	Yes	Yes		
IEt.16	Perception of attractiveness to funders	S4	IC7, A34	Yes			
<b>EFFICIENCY</b>							
IEc.01	Perception of whether the secretariat function meets the needs of EV4GH.		I1b, A04, A05	Yes			
IEc.02	Perception of actual and potential contributions of partner institutes and organisations to EV4GH	R5	I1c, A07	Yes			
IEc.03	Perception of whether or not the initiative is sufficiently resourced	Ec1	I1d, A03, A06, A39, A24	Yes		Yes	

Ref	Indicator	Evaluation Qns. (ToR)	ToC Ref	Interviews	Esurvey	Doc Review	Prior Evals.
IEc.04	Perception of whether or not the governance and taskforce structure is fit for purpose (including comparison with other NGO structures from document review)	Ec2, Ec3	I1a, A10, A11, A09	Yes		Yes	
IEc.05	Perception of the balance between professionals and volunteers and implications for effectiveness of the initiative	Ec2	I1f, A01, A02	Yes			
IEc.06	Perception of the degree to which there is a learning and facilitative environment for EV4GH		I1e, A18	Yes			
<b>IMPACT</b>							
II.01	Perception of impact on professional effectiveness	I1	C01	Yes	Yes		
II.02	Perception that participation in the initiative has resulted in increased confidence and motivation to engage and influence global health debates at global, national and local levels	I1	C02	Yes	Yes		
II.03	Perception of whether or not participation has led to increased opportunities (job roles, promotion, collaborations, funding, scholarships)	I1	C03	Yes	Yes		
II.04	Perception of extent of influence or leadership of alumni and contribution of EV4GH in attaining that position	I1	C05, C06	Yes	Yes		
II.05	Perception of the extent to which EV4GH has brought forward new voices within global health conferences and other events	Et4	C07	Yes	Yes		
II.06	Perception of degree to which alumni have influenced the global health discourse, in a 'constructively disruptive' way (new issues/approaches/paradigms} "decolonisation" "planetary health"	C2b, R2a, R2b, R2c, I1	C07, A36	Yes	Yes		
II.07	Perception of benefit of engagement for partner institutions.	I2		Yes			
<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>							
IS.01	Perception of the degree to which participation in EV4GH has lasting benefits	S1/2	A40	Yes	Yes		
IS.02	Perception of the potential advantages and disadvantages of selecting participants from specific institutions to gain critical mass	S3	A41	Yes	Yes		
IS.03	Recommendations for ensuring the financial viability and sustainability of the initiative	S4, S5	C04	Yes			
<b>FUTURE (ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS)</b>							
IF.01	Any other recommendations for the future.			Yes			
IF.02	Ranking of suggestions for improvement of the initiative (esurvey)	S1/2			Yes		
IF.03	Anything else.			Yes			

## ANNEX 6: FEEDBACK FROM SURVEY ON PURPOSE STATEMENT

The following bullet points summarise the qualitative responses to the purpose statement provided by survey respondents.

### Supportive feedback:

- Like the focus on empowering
- I like it/Perfectly OK/Great
- Comprehensive

### Critical feedback/Suggestions for Improvement:

- At all levels is not very clear as a phrase
- Missing the word decision makers
- First sentence too long
- Rather than nurturing use practical, experiential or skills focussed – more action orientated words
- Replace through in the second sentence with “in three distinct ways”
- Exposure seems a weak word in the second sentence
- The categories of researcher leaders and activists need adding to not to just capture everyone else in the phrase ‘other’
- More attention needs to be put on disadvantaged countries in global south
- Comprehensive but quite long/shorten and make more catchy/too wordy/too long
- Suggest switching the order of the sentences
- Focus is not just on emerging but the diversity and connection between emerged, emerging and yet to emerge that makes it purpose seductive, meaningful and inspiring
- Verb empowers suggests authority that does not reflect the horizontal nature of the initiative.
- More on the commitment to underrepresented voices and researchers
- Be good to capture something that reflects the decolonisation movement in terms of commitment to diverse knowledge
- Emphasise it is a global programme
- Could tighten alignment of the vision to the interventions **“EV4GH empowers a community of emerging opinion leaders and movers that shape local and global health systems toward equity and social justice. We bring together a diverse mix of high-potential individuals through 1. An innovative programme of blended learning and peer support 2. A collaboration platform for alumni across the globe and 3. Opportunities to engage with the global health community (through Health Systems Global and other platforms and partners).”**

### III.1 About Emerging Voices – mission and vision

Emerging Voices for Global Health (EV4GH) is an innovative multi-partner blended training program and network. It includes face-to-face training and virtual training components. The program targets young, promising and emerging health policy & systems researchers, decision-makers and other health system professionals with an interest in becoming influential global health voices and/or local change makers, particularly in LMIC.

This year, Emerging Voices celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A decade ago, the initiative for the EV program was taken by the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp in line with ITM's Switching the Poles objective, aiming explicitly at increasing the voice of scientists from LMICs in the global health community. In addition, the initiative intended to energize the "typical conference" format, during which presentations are given and participants sit in and listen, by introducing more innovative formats. From the start, EV4GH also had a strong focus on equity. Over time, EV4GH grew and acquired many different partners, while transitioning to a network structure (in addition to a training program). Since 2015, EV4GH has a globally representative governing board, comprised of elected EV alumni, and a secretariat, currently led by the Institute of Public Health in Bangalore. Since 2015, EV4GH has also become a Thematic Working Group of Health Systems Global (HSG), a diverse, global membership organisation of researchers, decision-makers and implementers promoting health policy and systems research<sup>1</sup>.

Like in 2015, EV4GH now again faces a period of transition, with amongst others, a looming EV secretariat transition, a new round of governance elections whereby part of the governance team will be replaced (including current chair and co-chair/treasurer), an HSG secretariat transition, and all of this against the backdrop of a not exactly "business-as-usual" (largely virtual) EV programme in 2020/2021 (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) and resource constraints.

More information on: <http://www.ev4gh.net/about/ev4gh/>

### III.2 Project Background

EV works through calls for proposals. Since the start of the initiative, 7 calls for applications were launched (2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020). In total, more than 250 emerging voices participated in the program so far.

Overall, the journey as an Emerging Voices applicant is as follows: (<http://www.ev4gh.net/all-you-need-to-know-about-ev2020-faqs/>)

- E-coaching and distance learning in preparation of a face-to-face training (around 2 months)
- Face-to-face training: scientific presentation, networking and communication skills coaching using innovative formats, content training & field visit to the local health system facilities ( around 10 days)
- Young researchers & other changemakers' pre-conference (1 day)
- Participation in the Global Symposium on Health Systems Research ( 5 days)
- Wrap-up – focusing on Emerging 'beyond' their EV track (1 day)
- Membership of EV4GH network and other thematic working groups of Health Systems Global

<sup>1</sup> <https://healthsystemsglobal.org/about-us/>

In 2016, an internal evaluation of the EV initiative was conducted by two EV alumni. This included stocktaking aspects (number of EV, partners over the years, sectors in which EV work etc.) and included an in-depth analysis among alumni (and some other interviewees close to EV4GH) of subjects they felt the EV Governance Board should focus on for strategic planning purpose. A PowerPoint summary of the findings can be found in annex.

This year's EV (2020) venture will be somewhat different, as the HSG symposium in Dubai has gone fully virtual due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The EV2020 track will consist of a virtual program (of around 2 months), leading up to the virtual HSG symposium (November 2020). A F2F EV training is scheduled for end of March 2021, in Dubai, leading up to a health policy event (UAE health policy forum, possibly aligning also with a short "invitation only" synthesizing HSG event).

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### III.3 Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation should cover all 10 years of Emerging Voices existence, engaging as many EV alumni as possible (total = approximately 250 alumni) from their various perspectives (governing board and secretariat staff, very active alumni, 'silent' members, alumni who have more or less 'dropped out' over the years or have moved on ("emerged")). It should take into account the voices of staff at current and previous partner institutions (ITM, IPH Bangalore, Peking University, University of Cape Town etc.), global health experts familiar with the EV4GH trajectory, but also respondents from the broader HSG community (and particularly HSG Global Board, Alliance, ...) to discuss the collaboration over the years.

At ITM, we wish to specifically integrate the voices of (former) junior researchers, who helped to initiate the initiative and strongly supported it, in the first ventures in particular (i.e. before the "Switching the poles" transition in 2015).

Other respondents can of course also be invited if relevant to respond to the evaluation questions.

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### III.4 Evaluation Focus

#### III.4.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

As indicated above, EV has transformed over the years from a stand-alone initiative, to a network structure with a diversity of partners. ITM, with funding from the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Belgian Government (DGD) now wishes to evaluate the network and its impact on the Global Health Community, with special focus on the global health systems & policy research (GHSR) community.

The present evaluation is not a mandatory exercise by the donor agency. The evaluation focus is therefore not on 'upward' donor accountability (although it will also be used for this purpose) but on 'peer' and 'downward' accountability (participants, their communities, academia etc) , with the special aim **to learn** from the past, and make decisions for the future. The findings have to be relevant for orienting Emerging Voices in the current GHSR landscape, and guide the network on how to remain innovative, how to reach the right people, and how create a sustainable network structure, amongst others. Specific attention should be given to drafting a fundraising strategy adapted to the 'new' network structure in a competitive Global Health environment.

For ITM specifically, the findings will be integrated into a new five year program, funded by the Belgian government. Therefore, it includes a minor part specifically linked to the institute. Even though funding is provided through ITM, this evaluation does not aim to solely serve the benefit of the individual organisation, but rather support the network as a whole, to help it grow and remain relevant.

It should be a participatory evaluation, where the voices of EV alumni are at the core of the assignment. The evaluation includes a minor stocktaking part, where we aim to gain insight in the level of active engagement by the EV alumni.

### III.4.2 Evaluation Criteria and questions

#### Relevance

1. Can Emerging Voices still be called an innovative format? If so, why; if not, how can the format be adapted to better fit the needs of participants to give them voice within the global health system?
2. To what extent has EV managed to 'Switch the Poles' at symposia, and beyond (eg: more influence of Southern voices at these big conferences; but also perhaps, with a view on the wider distribution of power/mainstream paradigm in "Global Health" (cfr: decolonize global health movement, ...))? Have EV alumni managed to put new issues on the agenda, both content wise (e.g.: equity) and methodologically? Have some dared to go beyond the mainstream, taking more provocative (but evidence-based) stances?
3. Is the training approach used by EV the most appropriate to the needs of the participants? How can it be improved?
4. Can recommendations be made on the selection process and criteria?
  - a. Sub-question: Findings from the 2017 internal evaluation suggest that research excellence has become increasingly important in the selection of candidates, which does not stroke with the initial idea behind EV to give opportunities to more 'activist profiles'. EV therefor adapted its selection strategy in 2018, by including a track for journalists and other less 'academic' profiles. Has this new strategy helped? Did we manage to get a good balance between different profiles (activist, research,...)?
  - b. Sub-question: are equal opportunities provided to men and women to participate? What can we say in terms of gender relations in the program?
5. How can partner institutes become more involved, beyond the venture where they acted as co-host?

#### Coherence

1. Internal at ITM:
  - a. How well is EV interlinked with other projects of ITM? Should this be improved, and if so, how?
  - b. Is the EV initiative indeed a good example of ITM policies (for example 'Switching the Poles' (= giving more voice to researchers from LMICs), an early predecessor of the current 'decolonize global health' movement.
2. External:
  - a. How does EV fit within the Global Health community, and especially the global health policy & systems research community? Is it consistent with work of other actors in the field? How does it add 'something new' to the Global Health Community?
  - b. How does EV contribute to the debates around Health Policy and Systems Research both at international, national and local level? Should the focus on this topic be kept?
  - c. How does being an Technical Working Group of HSG fit into the conference way of working? Can this be improved, should it be continued?

#### Effectiveness

1. How many EV alumni are truly active members of the EV community?

2. How effective is it as a network (e.g.: Google group, formal & informal links between alumni, ...)
  - a. Sub-question: To what extent does EV4GH (also) need to be a network (i.e. going beyond its main focus on the blended training program, in the run-up to a global symposium)?
3. Is EV's current status as a Technical Working Group of Health Systems Global enough of a win-win?
4. How effective is EV in bringing forward new voices, on global health conferences and other fora?
5. Has EV4GH managed to also select enough EVs from underrepresented regions?

### **Efficiency**

1. Is there a correct balance in terms of distribution of both HR and financial resources between the year of a venture (with call, selection, blended learning program, ...) and the year in between? How does the current distribution impact follow-up of alumni and can recommendations be made to improve this?
2. Is there a need to professionalize EV? At present the board (and most taskforces) are run on a voluntary basis, capitalizing on the drive of EV alumni. The secretariat gets some funding, but not structurally (yet). Should some of these functions become more structurally embedded?
3. Is the current governance model the most appropriate for the initiative? Are the structure of the governance board and the secretariat and its mode of interaction the most appropriate for this initiative?

### **Impact**

1. What difference has participating in EV made for the alumni?
2. What has been the impact (if any) on partner institutes of the EV4GH?

### **Sustainability**

1. Do the benefits (if any) of participating in EV last? How does participation impact the increase of voices of alumni in the global health community?
2. How can sustainability be improved? How can we, for instance better facilitate collaborative research initiatives, capacity strengthening for alumni, coaching/mentorship by alumni etc.? How can we keep on supporting alumni after the intense EV phase?
3. Would sustainability be increased if more EV participants were selected from partner institutes, or some EVs (in different cohorts) from the same institutes, instead of largely going for individual applications? What are the pros and cons of both approaches?
4. What could be effective ways of ensuring financial viability/ sustainability of the EV program?
5. How can financial sustainability of the training programme/network be ensured? Can a specific fundraising strategy be proposed to diversify sources of income?

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## **III.5 Users of the Evaluation**

The findings of the evaluation will be used by the following groups:

- EV governance board: to evaluate the EV initiative and understand its place within the Global Health Community (and especially the health policy & systems research community). Conclusions and recommendations will be used to adapt the format where necessary in order to better respond to future, current and past EV's needs. The TOC will guide the initiative on future interventions;
- ITM:

- o The Development Office and EV support staff at ITM will use the evaluation findings to communicate to its main funder DGD, to use lessons learned in the drafting of a new five year framework agreement with DGD, and to incorporate lessons learned on how to increase the voice of partners and individual health specialists within its development projects.
- o The Commission on Development Cooperation (COS) will use the findings to gain a more in-depth understanding of ITMs development practices, and estimate the impact of 'Switching the Poles' initiatives
- o The management will use the evaluation findings for strategic decision making on future interventions

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### III.6 Methodology

We favour a mixed method approach, using both a quantitative and qualitative phase. The evaluation should be **participatory** in nature. Tenderers are invited to come up with innovative methods, to ensure the voices of EV are heard strongly in the whole exercise, or even going beyond, by giving them the lead over the process.

At the start of the evaluation, we expect the team to draft a theory of change, together with participants from all stakeholder groups, to make explicit the pathways of change and outcomes and impact EV hopes to achieve. The TOC should guide the process, be updated at various stages of the evaluation, and at the end serve as a guideline and practical tool for the EV governance board and secretariat on how to further develop the initiative. Seeing the current global health (i.e. Covid-19) situation, it will not be feasible to have a live workshop with different stakeholders to draft the first TOC. In the proposal, kindly go into more detail than saying 'online meeting tools will be used' to engage participants on the TOC.

Depending on the global health situation, in country visits for case studies can be agreed upon (for instance where there are many EV alumni), but we would like to advise to also include alternative methods (kindly take this into account when drafting the budget).

In order to get a feel of the EV track, the evaluators can participate at the event in Dubai to present first conclusions to EV in order to validate them, but also to observe how a typical EV F2F training program functions, and to integrate these findings into further reports. If the global health situation does not allow, this presentation can be given from a distance in order to ensure confirmation of findings.

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### III.7 Ethics and integrity

Ethics and integrity are key to our work. The contracted party will need to take into account strict GDPR regulations and the necessary measures to ensure no harm is done in any way to participants. In the proposal a specific section is expected on how participants will be informed throughout the evaluation process (start, implementation, communication of results) and how data will be managed.

In order to be compliant to GDPR regulations, ITM/EV will first contact EV alumni to ask their permission for the contracted party to get in touch, before any personal data will be transferred.

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## III.9 Management of the evaluation

Day to day management of the evaluation will be taken on by the steering committee of the evaluation. The monitoring and evaluation manager will be the key point of contact.

A steering committee composed of members of the EV governance board and secretariat, and ITM staff will review draft deliverables before approval. The members of the steering committee are:

- Sara Ardilla - Governance Board Co-Chair and representing the Region of the Americas
- Prashanth N S – Governance Board member, Institute of Public Health, India liaison
- Prof. Wim Van Damme –
- Kristof Decoster – EV governance board – liaison ITM
- Marjan Pirard – Education Coordinator, Department of Public Health, ITM
- Heleen Annemans – M&E manager ITM Development Office

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## III.10 Expected Qualifications of the assessment team

Specific details on the team's competence (expertise) and profile (qualifications) are described under I.10

Kindly note that the working language will be English.

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## III.11 Contact

- Heleen Annemans – M&E officer – hannemans@itg.be ; +32 473 604 881 
- Kristof Decoster - Health Policy Unit staff (Public Health Department ITM and EV secretariat member) – kdecoster@itg.be

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## III.12 Annexes

### III.12.1 PowerPoint presentation with findings from 2016 evaluation

Please click the image to access all slides

### **1. Commission the facilitated development of a ten-year strategic plan, detailed financial model and associated fundraising strategy**

- 1.1 Review the purpose statement, feedback from survey respondents, and the ToC as part of a strategic review process
- 1.2 Agree strategic commitment to innovation and risk within the content of the training programme
- 1.3 Review existing and new potential channels in relation to either internal or external communication needs
- 1.4 Develop an improved detailed financial model – including the monetary value of the volunteering and hidden subsidies e.g. HSG membership fees
- 1.5 Develop fundraising strategy aligned to the strategy (including a donor database and communications plan)
- 1.6 Investigate the possibility of restructuring and increased funding in the next round of DGD funding to support expansion plans
- 1.7 Decide on optimum numbers for a venture in order to be able to give a gold standard experience and provide a target for fundraising for scholarships
- 1.8 Conduct a scoping exercise to better understand the constraints and opportunities to fundraising within HSG
- 1.9 Recruit a fundraiser
- 1.10 Explore the possibility of setting up and building a reserve fund
- 1.11 Explore the possibility of crowdfunding to resource components of the programme
- 1.12 Assess alumni's appetite to make voluntary contributions towards EV4GH

### **2. Strengthen Initiative Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 2.1 Review and adapt the monitoring framework provided (See Output 3)
- 2.2 Develop an implementation strategy for collecting, recording and reporting on M&E
- 2.3 Create a standard format for the post venture evaluation that is integrated with the M&E framework
- 2.4 Track feedback given to participants to ensure equal experience and accountability

### **3. Develop a partnership strategy that differentiates the different types of partners and highlights their added value**

- 3.1 As part of the broader strategy development consider what partnerships would be required to advance the initiative's objectives.
- 3.2 Expand and clarify the typology proposed and map and assess current and potential partnerships.
- 3.3 Develop a clearer understanding of the evolving role from local host to supporting partner.
- 3.4 Consider what post-venture processes could be developed to improve strategic engagement between EV4GH and venture partners
- 3.5 Create strategic partnerships with key global health institutions where EV4GH can benefit from professional opportunities (scholarships, internships, funding)
- 3.6 Develop strategic relationships with other platforms (blogs, academic journals) to facilitate access for EV4GH alumni
- 3.7 Look for opportunities to expand strategic partnerships that give alumni opportunities to further develop their skills.
- 3.8 Explore with alumni, HSG (and TWGs), and other strategic partners, what additional mentoring support and/or access to alternative platforms for amplifying young voices
- 3.9 Ensure ITM Antwerp staff and departments are aware of how to reach out to EV4GH for potential collaborations.
- 3.10 Develop strategic partnerships to share information on internships, scholarships and employment routes for early career researchers

#### **4. Restructure the board, secretariat and taskforces to create more delineation between operational and strategic roles**

- 4.1 Resolve the secretariat transfer issue as a matter of priority
- 4.2 Develop a framework to support the transfer of the secretariat function.
- 4.3 Consider changing to a smaller strategic board with a focus on skills supported by a regionally representative advisory committee
- 4.4 Develop clear procedures for the Board
- 4.5 Refocus the taskforces once the strategic review has taken place and require them to have an annual plan with clear targets/outputs
- 4.6 Develop a framework for which decisions can be made at secretariat level and which need to go to board level
- 4.7 Consider a broader set of paid roles for a project/network manager, fundraiser and communications role
- 4.8 Reflect on widening representation to include other marginalised geographies and groups and ensure representation of southern-based alumni as well as diaspora
- 4.9 View the cohort rather than regional structure as a more organic organising unit for collaboration

#### **5. Expand the volunteer base and consider a limited incentives and awards scheme within available resources**

- 5.1 Agree the optimal balance between facilitators and participants
- 5.2 Ensure clear planning for ventures which includes work in the intermediate year
- 5.3 Develop clear terms of reference for volunteers that specify the expected outputs of the assignments as well as the reporting and accountability processes that will govern volunteers' work
- 5.4 Strengthen communication on number and type of volunteer roles required
- 5.5 Have different levels of volunteer engagement/tasks for alumni with less availability
- 5.6 Ensure that there is communication and transparency about gaps and the need for volunteers as well as the numbers of volunteers
- 5.7 Expand the number of volunteering options by developing small task-based opportunities
- 5.8 Use internships to capture case studies, stories and narratives
- 5.9 Consider a limited incentive scheme within the limits of available resources accompanied by clear policy to ensure equitable implementation
- 5.10 Recognise alumni achievements through EV4GH awards

#### **6. Make strategic decisions about criteria for EV4GH recruitment in relation to diversities**

- 6.1 Decide on where EV4GH focus on diversity will be in the next few ventures given that it is impossible to be truly diverse in small participant numbers.
- 6.2 Use opportunities of the location of the conference to expand specific diversities; geographic, institutional, activist groups.
- 6.3 In addition to the focus on young researchers, decide on whether the focus is on activists or research activists and/or policy makers and then address the advertising, application, potential partnerships and course content to meet the specific needs of these groups.
- 6.4 Retain focus on individual applications and individual capacity strengthening rather than building critical mass institutionally
- 6.5 Complete a needs assessment and design bespoke elements of the programme if future ventures focus on having participation from non-research focussed participants

#### **7. Choose one or two core focal areas and one biennial topic to harness a collective EV4GH voice**

- 7.1 EV4GH should select one or two core focal areas to develop thought leadership, a collective voice and collaborative action
- 7.2 Engage new cohorts to select one biennial topic for action between ventures

7.3 Ensure all collective outputs are clearly branded with EV4GH and provide an electronic branding pack for use by individual alumni

**8. Recognise that influence through activism and advocacy is understood in different ways and encourage EVs to use these different models to have an impact**

**9. Launch a quarterly webinar series to promote cross cohort interaction, career advice, skills sharing and collaborative action**

9.1 Create opportunities to get to know alumni across cohorts through webinars and improved database facility

9.2 Include career hacks or advice from emerged alumni at regular between venture webinars

**10. Focus on innovation in online and face to face learning communities, both for the venture and the network**

10.1 Identify spaces for sharing, discussion and community creation as part of a review of online innovation

10.2 Identify funding to review and update the online learning platform, for user friendliness and ability to innovate, linked to an upgraded alumni platform

10.3 Decide within the strategic review whether or not to have a more formal mentorship scheme or less formal buddy system to follow up on agreed goals

10.4 Increase the time for peer sharing and learning in the programme (virtual or face to face)

10.5 In the medium to long term consider engaging with newly selected participants to ensure their voice feeds into the design and content of the learning programme

10.6 Ensure horizon scanning for innovation in communication techniques between ventures

10.7 Continue to support EVs to use effective and where appropriate innovative formats to communicate to non-academic audiences

10.8 Create a directory where alumni can contact each other and update their own details

10.9 Look at the option of an opportunities noticeboard

10.10 Separate out mailings that are internal to EV4GH from the Google Group

10.11 Explore options for supporting academic writing via a community of practice combined with mentoring support

10.12 Look for cost-effective ways of engaging additional early career researchers at HSRS to broaden reach and counter danger of exclusivity

**11. Engage with HSG to better understand how HSG and EV4GH can complement their evolving strategic thinking including regionalisation**

11.1 HSG's regionalisation agenda may open up new opportunities to expand diversity in the medium-term; leverage these rather than setting up parallel structures.

11.2 Focus on evolving and creatively stimulating the relationship with HSG rather than reaching out to new platforms

11.3 Develop training materials/packs to help alumni cascade training to institutions and/or projects in their region