



Canadian Conference on Global Health
October 17-19, 2019
Governance for Global Health: Power, Politics and Justice

Background

The 25th Canadian Conference on Global Health (CCGH) will examine the theme of **governance for global health**, acknowledging the importance of accountability and the influence of power and politics on health. Investments and public policies that seek to improve health, and the determinants of health, benefit all and help societies thrive.

Governments have a fundamental responsibility to protect, promote, and attain the highest standard of physical and mental health of populations¹. The private sector, through ethical and accountable corporate governance, must also take into account the health and well-being of their surrounding communities. Civil society needs a safe space to hold government and the private sector accountable – a space which allows for constructive critique, free from retribution.

Governance in global health refers to a wide range of functions which can be carried out by decision makers and governments, the private sector, communities and civil society as they seek to achieve their policy and operational objectives. It involves balancing competing influences and demands in complex and shifting global health environments.

Good governance is regarded as one of the key building blocks of any health system, helping to ensure that adequate policies, effective oversight, and strong accountability mechanisms are in place for its proper design management and implementation.² Governance ensures accountability by putting in place: structures, rules and processes for health sector organizations; mechanisms for independent oversight, monitoring, review and audit;

¹ The Right to Health. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Factsheet31.pdf>

² William D. Savedoff, World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper 5655, Governance in the Health Sector: A Strategy for Measuring Determinants and Performance, Human Development Network Office of the Chief Economist, May 2011

transparent availability and publication of policies, regulations, plans, reports, accounts; and openness to scrutiny by political representatives and civil society.³

When governance is weak, there is a risk that health systems become vulnerable to corruption. Corruption is a significant drain on public health budgets, undercuts equitable access to health services, as well as quality of care. In short, corruption is a critical threat to global health goals. Transparency through solid accountability mechanisms helps to shed light on such corruption.

There are **four (4) cross-cutting themes** providing bridges and links between and across all sub-themes:

1. **Gender** - Governance and power are inextricably linked to gender. Now more than ever, with national and international movements to improve and acknowledge gender inequities and its impacts for global health and beyond, it will be critical to explore the approaches to close the gaps, embrace feminism, improve maternal, newborn and child health, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.
2. **Equity** - Ensuring that good governance and its outcomes impact those individuals and communities that need and require it the most is critical for effective and appropriate implementation for addressing equity by designing outcomes and methods for and with vulnerable and under-served populations acknowledging the impacts of intersectionality.
3. **Evidence** - Politics and power often reflect the collective will and movements of communities. However, good governance should also take the best evidence to help inform decision making. In an era with easily accessible information and a wealth of resources and data at our fingertips, and the growing field of artificial intelligence, evidence-based practice is crucial.
4. **Sustainability** - Climate change is arguably one of global health's most significant challenges being tackled at various levels of governance. The long-term impacts and viability of outcomes of decisions ought to balance human development and advancement with environmental and biodiversity sustainability.

Sub-themes that will be examined include:

1. Globalization, governance, and diplomacy for health
2. Accountability, transparency and mechanisms for governance
3. Peace, conflict, and governance
4. Public-private partnerships and governance
5. Promoting governance by activism, advocacy, and grassroots mobilization

³ Governance. Health Systems topics. Available at: <https://www.who.int/healthsystems/topics/stewardship/en/>

6. Inter-sectoral action for governance and policies

SUB-THEMES:

1. Globalization, governance, and diplomacy for health

Global health diplomacy brings together the disciplines of health promotion, public health, clinical medicine, international affairs, management, law and economics. It focuses on negotiations that shape and manage the global policy environment for health. The relationship between health, foreign policy and trade is at the cutting edge of global health diplomacy.⁴ The World Health Organization suggests that it is important that there be a more systematic and proactive approach to identify and understand key current and future changes impacting global public health.

Globalization, global politics and the ability to negotiate and collaborate across nations can promote significant and long-term impact on global public health. In particular, the role of power and the inequalities of global power in negotiating the state of global public health will be explored further in this sub-theme, especially the need to bring in more diverse perspectives including gender, geography and race. It will also examine the approaches that are currently being implemented, the challenges and opportunities for cooperation, and global collective action that addresses global public health.

Areas for exploration can include but will not be limited to:

- Globalization and global public health
- Global health diplomacy
- International Health Regulations (IHR)*⁵
- Global declarations and calls for action (e.g. Universal Health Coverage and Primary Health Care – Astana Declaration)
- Globalization, trade and health
- Global health governance and the feminist agenda

2. Accountability, transparency and mechanisms for governance

Good governance in any sector promotes evidence-based decision making, transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. Accountability facilitates improved priority setting,

⁴ WHO

⁵ IHR. (WHO)

transparent outcome monitoring, and appropriate performance monitoring. “Accountability in service delivery may be conceived of as processes through which communities and households can hold providers responsible for the adequacy and effectiveness of the services they offer.”⁶

Practitioners, whether governmental, academic or non-governmental organizations, must be accountable for quality, equity, relevance and effectiveness in their own practice but also in /to the system in which they work. The Tunis Declaration at the World Summit on Social Accountability in 2017 emphasized a commitment to ensuring that global health workforce needs were met through training, research and practice, accreditation, advocacy and social justice and yet we know the work globally is delivered by women and led by men⁷.

The lines of accountability are often poorly defined, established and institutionalized. Evidence also suggests that corruption in the health sector has a disproportionate effect on disadvantaged populations, thus undermining the potential for health equity.

Areas for exploration can include but will not be limited to:

- Accountability (local, national, global levels – e.g., building capacity from national to local levels to use the data and information for decision making
- Measuring, tracking and implementing mechanisms for transparency, anti-corruption and ethical development and research practices and programs
- Health equity: how do policies and programs have an impact on those who need it the most?
- How do we identify, measure and account for inequities and equity effectiveness? How does this improve governance and accountability?
- What are the accountability measures for good governance that are working and what are the challenges and mechanisms for mitigation?
- What is the role of governance of health systems in terms of corruption? The health sector is particularly vulnerable to corruption given the costs of implementation, the technical complexity and scientific demands, and asymmetric knowledge and information between patients, suppliers and service providers.

3. Peace, conflict, and governance

The failure of governance systems and the inequities and vulnerabilities created, inevitably lead to conflict, whether within or between nation-states. How are the most vulnerable protected in periods of humanitarian crisis? What is the role of northern power and approaches to conflict

⁶ *UNICEF*

⁷ WHO, 2019

resolution? When do we have the right to invoke the obligation to protect? How do we address the complete sidelining of women in peace processes, while they continue to be the most affected? The response to conflict is often for the most vulnerable to flee the crisis situation, and thus migration becomes a key element in this discussion.

This sub-theme will examine how systems of governance and evidence-based allocation of resources within countries create the conditions for conflict or peace. This will not be limited to health systems governance but rather include and incorporate other systems which interact with health systems.

Governance systems that ensure women's participation and leadership contribute to stability and lasting peace. They are characterized by promoting: inclusive, participatory processes that bring their citizens into the processes of knowing and understanding evidence, and participating in decision making; systems for accountability that ensure transparent and equitable implementation; and sustaining the necessary level of capacity to continue such governance.⁸

Areas for exploration can include but will not be limited to:

- The issue of governance and accountability in emergency situations, particularly in armed conflicts where there are no rules or enforcement for accountability. How are established governments held accountable in such situations?
- What is the impact of national and regional conflict and crisis on migration and internal displacement including the role of human rights frameworks?
- Can transparent governance mitigate conflict and inequitable power structures?
- How does the gendered nature of peace and security processes affect health and health systems?
- What is the role of truth and reconciliation processes for sustainable and peaceful futures?

4. Public-private-partnerships and governance

Contemporary theories of health governance emphasize the role of both government and non-state actors.⁹ Good governance is complex, imperfect and dynamic. It does not necessarily guarantee that if parts of it are in place, key policy goals will be achieved.

⁸ Uppsala University, Department of Peace and Governance. 2019

⁹ Siddiqi et al, 2008 and Sabri et al, 2007

An important component of governance and accountability for global health is the principles and practices of corporate social responsibility (CSR), often considered as public-private partnerships. These must be more aggressively explored within the human health and development axis. CSR is generally regarded as a business response to social and environmental challenges, often as a result of interaction with civil society. It is an expression of a business desire to create value for both the corporation and the community by investing in the improvement of the workforce, their families, and the communities in which the business is conducted.¹⁰In some cases, CSR lies at the intersection between the private and public sectors, seeking to benefit both.

Strategies to achieve corporate social responsibility and successful public-private partnerships work with the concept known as the “triple bottom line” - social, environmental (or ecological), and financial. These three divisions are also called the three Ps: people, planet, and profit, or the "three pillars of sustainability" for corporations.¹¹

5. Promoting governance by activism, advocacy, and grassroots mobilization

Governance for health at the regional, national, and international levels is well researched. Health governance at the local level, that is particularly concerned with the role of local actors and institutions, such as community organizations, women’s groups, youth associations and civil society actors, is less documented but holds a significant impact on how governance responds and incorporates civil engagement.¹²

Recognizing the changing, dynamic, and globalized world in which we live, the role that activism, advocacy, and grassroots mobilization plays in the governance structures is of particular interest, impacting health policies, programs, and funding in Canada and across nations. Further, this includes processes to allow for meaningful and critical engagement between civil society and governing bodies, and sustainable mechanisms to ensure governing institutions are appropriately transparent. More specifically, how can it be ensured that voices, especially from women and marginalized groups, take a more leading role in setting global health priorities, in the development of an overall strategy and framework affecting many nations, such as the SDGs?

¹⁰ https://www.msh.org/sites/msh.org/files/review_of_health-related_corporate_social_responsibility_in_africa.pdf

¹¹ https://www.msh.org/sites/msh.org/files/review_of_health-related_corporate_social_responsibility_in_africa.pdf

¹² Akbari, 2014

6. Intersectoral action for governance and policies

In the current era of the Sustainable Development Goals, the linkages of health with development and inter-sectoral collaboration have been clearer than ever. The challenges of global health, including the lack of women's voice and entrenched gender inequalities, communicable and non-communicable diseases and the health effects of climate, trade and other policies, have far-reaching impacts as a result of a more globalized community - a community in need of sustainable and coordinated action for improving and maintaining health and wellbeing.

Intersectoral action refers to those actions affecting health outcomes undertaken by non-health sectors sometimes with collaboration with the health sector. The impact of such collaborations within and across governments is critical, as is the ability to account for progress across sectors, and the appropriate allocation of funding and attention to policies and programs that will allow governments and nations to meet the SDGs. How governing bodies respond to, and proactively prepare for, various calls for change is critical to strong implementation, as are the governance processes that contribute to or deny the outcomes desired. This includes the acknowledgment of the One Health or Whole of Government approach to designing and implementing programs, policies, legislation and research in which multiple sectors communicate and work together to achieve better public health outcomes.¹³

Areas for exploration can include but will not be limited to:

- The UN Sustainable Development Goals: also known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity¹⁴
- Planetary Health: a strategy to find solutions to health risks posed by poor planetary stewardship, through influencing global health approaches and policy that balances human advancement with environmental and biodiversity sustainability
- One Health as a mechanism for operationalizing Planetary Health

¹³ WHO

¹⁴ United Nations