



Strengthening the global health ecosystem

The perspective of local civil society

The Netherlands' prominent role in global health

WACI Health¹ commends the Netherlands for its longstanding and principled commitment to global health. The adoption of the Dutch Global Health Strategy in 2023 demonstrates visionary leadership and a strong understanding of health as a global public good. Its whole-of-government approach also underscores the Netherlands' recognition that global health sits at the intersection of development, diplomacy, and domestic well-being.

We further applaud the Netherlands for maintaining its prioritization of health within its development cooperation portfolio and for its continued support to the multilateral health system. In particular, the Netherlands has been a consistent and impactful partner to key global health initiatives, including the World Health Organization, Gavi, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Global Financing Facility, UNFPA, and UNAIDS. This support is vital in sustaining progress against infectious diseases, strengthening health systems, advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and saving women, children and adolescents globally.

Responding to the global health financing crisis

The global health community is currently facing a profound financing crisis, which threatens to reverse hard-won gains and widen inequalities. In this context, all stakeholders—governments, multilateral organizations, implementers, and communities—must work together to ensure that limited resources deliver maximum impact.

Key priorities include:

- Building on what works: Investments in primary health care, strong community health systems, integrated service delivery, and local leadership have consistently demonstrated high impact and resilience, while reinforcing country leadership and nationally defined health priorities. As African countries advance toward Universal Health Coverage, investments should support sustainable and locally led health systems.
- Scaling proven models: The Global Fund exemplifies effective global health financing, grounded in country ownership, community engagement, transparency, and value for money, delivering strong results and proven impact, delivering strong results while

¹ WACI Health is an Africa regional advocacy organization, which champions improved health outcomes for all in Africa through an effective, evidence-driven Pan-African civil society voice and action.

strengthening resilient and sustainable health systems. Its investments have also contributed to pandemic preparedness, laboratory systems, supply chains, and community systems that benefit broader health outcomes.

- Protecting essential investments: Safeguarding and expanding proven interventions and effective innovations is the most efficient way to save lives and sustain progress during fiscal constraints, while supporting countries to transition toward greater sustainability and self-reliance.
- Driving efficiency and accountability: The current financial pressures should catalyze greater efficiency, coordination, and accountability, rather than lead to reduced ambition or fragmented efforts.

At the same time, the current financing crisis presents an opportunity to accelerate sustainable and domestically driven health systems. It is key for international partners to support African countries to strengthen domestic resource mobilization, improve public financial management, and expand fiscal space for health while protecting the most vulnerable populations during transition processes.

Community perspectives on the global health ecosystem reform

From the perspective of civil society and communities, the reform of the global health architecture must remain outcome-oriented and people-centered. The meaningful inclusion of civil society in the reform process is crucial to ensure the needs, interests, and rights of communities and the most vulnerable populations are duly considered.

Expectations of communities for the reform of the global health ecosystem include:

- Focus on impact, not structures: Reform must lead to better health outcomes, not simply institutional reconfiguration.
- Sustain community-led responses: Communities require predictable and sustainable financing, especially for frontline and community-based services.
- Advance equity and rights: Reform must prioritize human rights, gender equality, and inclusion of marginalized populations, ensuring no one is left behind.
- Build on proven approaches: There is strong support for models like the Global Fund, which emphasizes inclusive governance, community participation, and health service integration through supporting resilient health and community systems, while fostering country ownership and accountability.
- Measure success meaningfully: Progress should be evaluated by improved access to services, stronger community systems, and reduced health inequities.

The role of civil society and communities in global health

Strong and well-supported local civil society organizations (CSOs) are indispensable to both global health delivery and reform. They provide frontline services and reach marginalized

populations; ensure oversight and accountability, including monitoring government commitments; advocate for increased domestic investment in health; bring attention to the needs of the most vulnerable groups; and strengthen transparency, citizen engagement, and social accountability within health systems.

For example, community-led monitoring in HIV and TB programs has improved service quality, accessibility, and transparency, while civil society advocacy has been instrumental in securing policy reforms and increased domestic funding in many countries.

Investing in CSO capacity strengthening is therefore not optional—it is central to achieving equitable and sustainable global health outcomes.

Parliamentarians also play a critical role in strengthening health systems by safeguarding health investments, exercising oversight of public expenditure, advancing equitable health policies, and ensuring that national and international commitments are translated into action.

What can Dutch institutions do to sustain a fit-for-purpose global health ecosystem?

Considering the above, we urge the Parliament and the Government of the Netherlands to:

1. Sustain and strengthen global health financing: continue robust and predictable support to global health and key multilateral initiatives, including the Global Fund, to protect and scale life-saving interventions, while strengthening resilient health systems, supporting country-led priorities, and enabling sustainable transitions toward greater domestic ownership.
2. Champion inclusive and community-centered reform: invest in the strengthening of civil society and community systems to ensure that global health ecosystem reform remains equitable, accountable, and grounded in lived realities.
3. Defend human rights and SRHR globally: use the Netherlands' strong diplomatic voice to protect and promote human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially in contexts where these principles are under threat.

Conclusion

In an increasingly interconnected world, investments in global health are investments in global stability, economic prosperity, health security, and international cooperation. Sustained support for effective multilateral institutions and locally led responses remains essential to addressing shared challenges that transcend borders.

At a time of constrained resources and evolving global challenges, the Netherlands has a critical role to play as a principled, forward-looking leader in global health. By sustaining its commitment, championing inclusive reform, and defending human rights, it can help ensure that the global health ecosystem evolves, ensuring effectiveness, inclusivity, equity, resilience, and sustainable transitions toward country ownership and self-reliance.