



**RGHI** Rotterdam Global  
Health Initiative



# Strategy 2030 Advancing Equity, Knowledge, and Impact in Global Health

Photo credit: Michelle Muus

## Foreword

Welcome to the Rotterdam Global Health Initiative Strategy 2030, which sets out our vision and role in a rapidly evolving global landscape. The Rotterdam Global Health Initiative (RGHI), established by Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) and Erasmus Medical Centre (Erasmus MC) unites and showcases the work of researchers and educators who collaborate worldwide with policymakers, healthcare providers, patient advocates, and non-governmental organisations. We connect directly to EUR's impact ambition of a Healthy Society with Accessible and Affordable Healthcare. Engagement with local experts and communities allows RGHI members to identify societal questions and experiences to guide the direction of our work. This interaction between science and society ensures that RGHI research and teaching connects to the current, most pressing societal challenges in health and healthcare.

Since its launch in 2011, RGHI has grown into a vibrant community of more than 250 members, driving academic projects in nearly 30 low- and middle-income countries. Looking ahead, our ambition is to expand this network further, strengthening partnerships that deliver outstanding research and teaching in global health.

Our members have produced a substantial body of high-impact, peer-reviewed publications, advancing both academic knowledge and societal progress. These outputs reflect both individual contributions and collaborative initiatives within RGHI. In education, RGHI members have developed innovative Bachelor's and Master's courses inspired by cutting-edge global health research. Student exchanges, such as those between the Public & Global Health Major at Erasmus University College and the Global Challenges in Health & Behaviour elective at ESHPM, have proven highly successful and provide a model for future exchanges on an international scale.

Partnerships with universities in Asia and Africa continue to grow, while Early Career Researchers are supported through initiatives such as the RGHI Best Poster Award, RGHI Best Pitch Award, and RGHI Travel Grant.

This Strategy 2030 sets out our plans to further strengthen impactful and high-quality global health research and teaching through equitable partnerships in three key focus areas: social and environmental determinants of health, healthcare systems, and disease modelling. In collaboration with partners across low- and middle-income countries who seek our expertise, we aim to advance both good health and accessible, high-quality healthcare.

I am proud of our diverse international membership and look forward to RGHI continuing to drive excellence and impact in global health research and education.

**Igna Bonfrer, PhD**

Director, Rotterdam Global Health Initiative



## About the Rotterdam Global Health Initiative

The RGHI is an interdisciplinary academic network for global health research and education, initiated by Erasmus University Rotterdam, which has evolved into a vibrant community of international partners. The network is led and funded by Erasmus School of Health Policy & Management (ESHPM), the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), the Department of Public Health at Erasmus Medical Centre (Erasmus MC), and the Erasmus School of Economics (ESE). Current collaborations involve researchers, policymakers, non-governmental organisations, healthcare providers, and patient representatives across 30 low- and middle-income countries. The outstanding research and education delivered by RGHI members inform evidence-based policy on social determinants of health and health system reform.

### Vision

Addressing the social determinants of ill-health and ensuring access to high quality health care for all worldwide.

### Mission

Through equitable partnerships across low- and middle-income countries, we contribute to good health as well as accessible and quality health care, informed by excellent interdisciplinary research and education.

### What we do

RGHI is dedicated to advancing high-quality research and education to address global health inequities through interdisciplinary collaboration, with a particular focus on social and environmental determinants of health, healthcare systems, and disease modelling. Through equitable partnerships across low- and middle-income countries, we work closely with researchers, policymakers, non-governmental organisations, healthcare providers, and patient representatives to inform evidence-based policies on social determinants of health and health system reforms.

## Alignment with the EUR Strategy

The Erasmus University Rotterdam Strategy 2030 identifies as one of its main impact domains “accessible and affordable healthcare” which closely aligns with RGHI’s expertise. Further, relevant key strategic domains include engagement through “open innovation networks”, diversification of income streams and strategic alliances. This obviously on top of excellent education and research. RGHI is very well aligned and can deliver on each of the strategic goals identified in the EUR Strategy 2030.

The Rotterdam Global Health Initiative’s new strategy connects directly to EUR’s impact ambition of a Healthy Society with Accessible and Affordable Healthcare. By tackling issues such as reducing health inequalities, improving maternal and child health, and exploring digital innovations that make care more widely available, RGHI puts knowledge into action. We take being an engaged university literally at RGHI. We work directly with researchers in the low- and middle- income countries, collaborating on knowledge generation and co-creating innovations that not only strengthen EUR’s reputation abroad but also allow us to learn from partners around the world. In doing so, RGHI helps drive smart, inclusive solutions to meet the rising demand for care while keeping healthcare within everyone’s reach.



# Governance and structure

## Management Team



**Igna Bonfrer PhD**  
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**Tanja Houweling PhD**  
Erasmus MC,  
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**Robert Sparrow PhD**  
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**Carlos Riumallo Herl PhD**  
Erasmus School of  
Economics



**Amalia Hasnida PhD (cand.)**  
Erasmus School of Health  
Policy & Management

## Steering Group



**Prof. Maarten IJzerman**  
Chair  
Erasmus School of Health  
Policy & Management



**Prof. Hester Lingsma**  
Erasmus MC,  
Department of Public  
Health



**Prof. Owen O'Donnell**  
Erasmus School of  
Economics /  
Erasmus School of Health  
Policy & Management



**Prof. Ruard Ganzevoort**  
International Institute  
of Social Studies

## Professional Services



**Vivienne Sserumaga  
Mulema**  
Scientific Communicator



**Patricia van Loo-Kemp**  
Marketing &  
Communications Adviser



**Alizia Kamani**  
Strategic  
Communications Adviser



**Caroline Verboom**  
Secretary

## Our Focus Areas

# 1

### Social and environmental determinants of health

While healthcare systems play a crucial role in shaping health outcomes, economic, behavioral, social, and environmental factors remain the primary determinants of healthier lives. The Rotterdam Global Health Initiative brings together expertise across disciplines such as economics, econometrics, development studies, governance, and epidemiology to support individuals in achieving better health. We continue to make a significant impact by exploring the links between poverty and health and conducting research in low-resource settings to inform policies that address systemic health inequalities.

**Our areas of specialised expertise:** the first 1,000 days of life and early child development; social protection and health; antimicrobial resistance and self-medication in lower socioeconomic households; the design of behavioural economic interventions; and planetary health.

# 2

### Health care systems

Ensuring access to high-quality healthcare for all, regardless of ability to pay, is a central goal of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. The Rotterdam Global Health Initiative seeks to promote health equity and universal health coverage through interdisciplinary research. While many effective treatments for various diseases exist, far less is known about how to ensure equitable access to these interventions. Our research and teaching address systemic barriers to healthcare access by examining changing disease burdens, healthcare financing, socioeconomic inequalities, governance, and the resilience of health systems.

**Our areas of specialised expertise:** the evaluation of health system reforms; healthcare financing; quality of care; accessibility of medicines; the measurement of inequalities; ageing and long-term care; and the growing burden of non-communicable diseases, including cancer.

# 3

### Disease modelling

Disease modelling is essential for understanding and mitigating the burden of diseases worldwide, particularly among vulnerable populations. It encompasses a wide range of health challenges, including neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and parasitic infections. The Rotterdam Global Health Initiative brings together expertise from diverse disciplines, such as epidemiology, medicine, and public health—to model diseases on a global scale.

**Our areas of specialised expertise:** evaluating intervention strategies, such as prophylactic treatments, to combat leprosy and other infectious diseases.

## Ambition 2030

By 2030, we aim to establish an even more vibrant and relevant network that is equally open to members in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) as at Erasmus University Rotterdam. We aspire to be a network that partner institutions, both within and outside academia, actively seek out for reliable, equitable, and high-quality collaboration in research and teaching related to social and environmental determinants of health, healthcare systems, and disease modelling.

RGHI's specific ambitions for 2030 are:

- Be a relevant network for all Global Health researchers at EUR and Erasmus MC. Expand the current membership of 250+ by approximately 20%, including more partners from LMICs, and provide proactive support to Early Career Researchers.
- Stimulate cross-faculty collaboration through initiatives such as seed money grants, generating additional research funding with local partners for academically and societally relevant projects.
- Communicate RGHI's work effectively to members and wider audiences, including researchers, funders, NGOs, and policymakers, through dedicated communication streams and a coordinated strategy.
- Support Early Career Researchers by providing opportunities to organise peer-focused training and professional development activities.



- Embed RGHI within EUR as a recognised stakeholder in global health initiatives, aligning its approach to accessible and affordable healthcare with the university's "open innovation networks" in Strategy 2030.
- Secure additional structural funding for RGHI beyond 2027.

## Objectives towards 2030

To reach these ambitions, the following actions will be taken.

### 2025: Developing our strategic direction towards 2030

- Identify the strong partnerships we need to nurture to reach our ambition.
- Identify pathways for new research ideas to develop by partners in the Global South with RGHI researchers. Potential pathways may include joint teaching or annual fellowships for researchers from the Global South.
- Identify how RGHI can realistically position itself compared to other major Global Health networks such as the Oxford Global Health Initiative, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Institute for Tropical Medicine Antwerp and Harvard Global Health Institute.
- Continuously share relevant news from and with our members and beyond through the quarterly

newsletter and RGHI website.

- Introduce small grants for early career researchers to support fieldwork and research in global health.



Bihar, India by Anandita Bardia



## 2026 - 2030

- Celebrate RGHI's 15th birthday (28th of October 2026).
- Identify the niches and comparative advantages of the current group of RGHI members, especially those affiliated to the EUR and Erasmus MC i.e. "our experts", to further expand the impact of the network.
- Secure and combine the required Professional Support for Grants building on the expertise available across the four schools.
- Explore and implement effective pathways to inform RGHI members about funding opportunities by working with the Research Development Office (Erasmus MC), Erasmus Research Services (EUR) and Research Project Office (ISS).
- Enable exchange of talented researchers between the global north and south, for example through field work, teaching and/or training grants. This allows RGHI members to identify new partners for cooperation and candidates to pursue a PhD at EUR.
- Support RGHI members in the development of more and even stronger ties with high quality research institutes worldwide and make these international cooperations visible.
- Stimulate joint grant applications across EUR faculties with local experts.
- Explore collaboration opportunities with Leiden University and TU Delft on global health research and teaching, potentially through LDE Global.
- Identify additional sources for structural funding of the RGHI after 2027.

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## Conclusion

The Rotterdam Global Health Initiative is driving a bold vision for 2030: advancing equity, knowledge, and impact in global health. By expanding its network, strengthening partnerships, and supporting researchers at every stage, RGHI will tackle the root causes of health inequities, inform evidence-based policy, and contribute to accessible, high-quality healthcare and healthier, fairer, and more resilient societies worldwide.

# Advancing Equity, Knowledge, and Impact in Global Health

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