



## **Report**

# **Norwegian Forum for Global Health Research 2016-2018**

### **Summary**

The main objective for Forum is to promote research and education of high quality with the aim of improving health and health services for marginalized population groups in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). The main outcome of the project is that Forum has developed an important role as an interdisciplinary network within the field of global health and health research, and provide a forum for exchanging ideas and views on research and methodology in Norway.

*Detailed outcomes and impact in the period 2016-2018, this period was funded by the Research Council of Norway, and Forum had a secretariat at the University of Bergen.*

- Supported research on global health, focused upon research in LMICs by arranging of three large conferences in global health in Norway 2016-2018, with 120, 250 and 130 participants, respectively.
- A Research School of Global Health (RSGH) in Norway was established in 2016 by a Forum Application.
- Forum supported strongly the establishment of the network Global Health Norway (GHN) in 2017 and is in Close Cooperation with both RSGH and GHN.

### **1. Background**

Global health often deals with challenges related to disasters of disease, of nature, and of war. The problems are often further aggravated by poverty, inequity and lack of resources. Healthcare professionals are needed, but so are health economists, engineers, political scientists, agriculturists and many others. Together, in an interdisciplinary co-operation, we can make a difference in the world.

This report concerns activities in the Norwegian Forum for Global Health Research (The Forum) 2016-2018. The Forum is a dynamic, networking group of Norwegian institutions and independent investigators involved in Global Health research. The Forum engages in joint contemporary activities like forming debates, supporting policies that shape research, capacity building and dissemination of research results from the global community.

#### *1.1 The establishment of The Norwegian Forum for Global Health Research*

The Norwegian Forum for Global Health Research (Forum) was established in 2005. The purpose of the Forum is to promote research and education of high quality with the aim of improving health and health services for marginalized population groups in low and middle-income countries. The Forum has played an important role as an interdisciplinary network within the field of global health and health research, and provides a forum for exchanging ideas and views on research and methodology. Forum is also an arena for collaboration on issues related to academic training and curriculum development. The Forum celebrated its 10th anniversary at a seminar on migration, arranged at the University of Oslo in 2017.



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## *1.2 Statutes and purpose for Forum*

The first General Assembly, 16 November 2006, approved Statutes for The Forum. These have been revised three times, that last time in April 2018.

The main aim of the Forum is stated in the Statutes, like this:

*“To promote high quality research and training aiming at improving health and health care for marginalized population groups in low- and middle income countries.”*

The sub-aims of the Forum are to:

- Improve and enhance the involvement of Norwegian research institutions in Global Health research and training
- Contribute to increased international collaboration in Global Health research and training with particular emphasis on strengthening the capacity of institutional partners in low- and middle income countries
- Improve funding for relevant, high-quality Global Health research from the Norwegian government and other sources
- Contribute to national and international processes and initiatives in the field of Global Health and health research

## **2. Activities in Forum 2016-2018**

An overview of activities performed by the Forum is presented here:

### *2.1 Members*

The Forum is an interdisciplinary network of individuals and Norwegian institutions that work with or have an interest in Global Health and Global Health research. The individual members and the institutions constitute the General Assembly, which is the highest authority of the Forum. The main categories of institutional members are universities, university colleges and other institutions involved in Global Health research. It also includes other institutions, governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. The number of members have been stable the past years. Government bodies such as the Research Council of Norway (RCN), the Directorate for Health and Norad have participated as observers since Forum was established. Forum has so far had mainly institutional members. At the Forum General Assembly in 2018, Forum was changed to an organization for individual membership.

### *2.2 Board*

The Forum has a Board that is responsible for all activities of the Forum, and which has become the most important meeting arena for leaders of Global Health research units in Norway. Each of the four main universities is represented with one Board member each, and two Board members represent the collective institute sector. In addition, two independent Board members are elected as representatives of other institutions. Other governmental or non-governmental – can be invited as observers.

The representatives of the Board and their deputies, which was last elected are:



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Elisabeth Darj/ Elin Dvergsdal NTNU; Johanne Sundby/Kristin Braa, University of Oslo; Bente E. Moen/Karen Marie Moland, University of Bergen; Erik Eik Anda/Turdi Wæhler, The Arctic University of Norway, UiT; Frode Forland/Anne Bergh, Norwegian Institute of Public Health; Stine Hellum Braathen/Arne H. Eide, Sintef; Anne Hatløy/Tone Sommerfelt, FAFO; Sheri Lee Bastien, Norwegian University of Life Sciences/Viva Combs Thorsen, University of Oslo; Miriam Christ, Norwegian Medical Student's association; Gunilla Kulla, Nord University. Moen has been the President in the project period.

Observers in the board meetings have been Sigurd Røtnes, Helsedirektoratet; Karine Kålsås and Zlata Turkanovic, Research Council of Norway; Ingvar T. Evjen Olsen, Norad.

## 2.3 Secretariat

Forum has had a Secretariat located at Centre for International Health, University of Bergen. This Secretariat has two 20% positions (Ingvild Hope and Gunhild Koldal) financed by the funding from the Research Council of Norway. The secretariat has performed the following tasks:

- Running the daily activities of the secretariat and supporting the President and the Board members
- \* Preparation for Board meetings and the General Assembly
- Preparation for meeting agendas and writing-up and distributing minutes
- Executing administrative tasks as decided by the Board
- Securing communication between members, including the distribution of newsletters and similar tasks
- Maintaining the Forum website
- Maintaining an inventory of activities and resources used for Global Health research in Norway
- Responding to inquiries and attending to Forum's correspondence
- Contributing to the organization of the global conferences.

## 2.4 Meetings, General Assemblies

The Forum generate opportunities for arranging meetings and conferences, which are an important part of Forum activity. In 2016-2018, there have been 8 board meetings every year, in addition to the annual General Assemblies. The minutes from the meetings can be found on the website:

<https://forumglobalhealth.w.uib.no/minutes/>

## 2.5 Conferences

2016: Forum participated in the arrangement of a Global Health conference "Norwegian Global Health Networks with Impact" in Bergen, in cooperation with Centre for International Health at University of Bergen and National Health Network for Development (NHU); 130 participants, and 20 presented posters.

2017 Forum helped at the arrangement of The 10th Conference on Global Health and Vaccination Research in Trondheim, "Ensuring healthy lives for all", arranged by the Research Council of Norway - in cooperation with NTNU, 250 participants and 40 posters.

2018, a Forum Conference was held in Oslo – "Health system strengthening: Health for all revisited", in cooperation with the National Research School of Global Health, Center for global health, University of Oslo, The Norwegian Institute of Public Health and Global Health Norway; 130 participants and 20 presented posters.

## 2.6 Focus areas and other scientific activities

Focus areas for the Forum in the project period were migration and innovation, and these topics have been central in the mentioned arrangements. Forum has also been engaged in work with the



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Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations, with a work group on this topic. Forum has also participated in smaller conferences and meetings in the area of Global Health. The Forum has been influential in shaping the agenda for Global Health related research questions within the Norwegian academic world.

Funding in Global Health has been reduced substantially the past years, and Forum finds the situation alarming. This has been a topic for the Forum board the past years. Forum has contributed to the public discussion on this topic, by contributions to newspapers as well as letters to policy makers.

## *2.7 Norwegian Research School*

A Research School of Global Health (RSGH) was established in 2016, after an application to RCN, sent from Forum board members with NTNU as the coordinator. The RSGH has been very successful and Forum has a close co-operation with this unit. The Director of Forum is represented in the board of RSGH, and is able to co-ordinate activities and be supportive for the processes related to PhD candidates in Global Health.

## *2.8 Development of a the network Global Health Norway*

The Forum has been involved in of the process of developing a new network: Global Health Norway. This was originally planned as a Norwegian Global Health Institute, as suggested in the Norwegian report “HelseOmsorg21”. The purpose of such an Institute would be to combine the efforts of the different institutions working on Global Health issues, and to increase opportunities for formal co-operation. Motivation for this initiative is based in the fact that several of the groups working on Global Health in Norway are small. A formalised Institute would have the necessary critical mass for undertaking the planning of large projects, for example with the EU. Such an Institute would provide a more easily identifiable contact point for policy makers enabling them to more easily contact the researchers with expertise in Global Health issues.

Forum supported strongly the establishment of Global Health Norway in 2017. GHN has established a board with representatives from the nine member institutions; the universities, the regional health authorities and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health. GHN is an important network in Global Health, and will be important for Forum in the future. Forum will be active in supporting the development of GHN. Forum and GHN will exist in the future as two entities with a close cooperation. Forum and GHN have overlapping goals for their activity. However, Forum focuses on research policy issues within global health to a higher degree than GHN, and wishes to remain as an independent organization. Forum and GHN will work towards a common goal - better health globally. Details of this collaboration are under development. In 2018 Forum has organized the secretariat for GHN. The two units co-operate on their web-pages ([www.globalhealth.no](http://www.globalhealth.no) and <https://forumglobalhealth.w.uib.no/>).

## **3. International co-operation**

The Forum is a member of The Federation of European Societies for Tropical Medicine and International Health (FESTMIH). The Forum has participated in annual FESTMIH board meetings in the project period, and been engaged in the planning of European conferences arranged by FESTMIH.

## **4. Publications**

The Forum has been responsible for 100 oral presentations at conferences in 2016 and 2018, and about 40 poster presentations at these events. In addition, Forum has contributed to a number of presentations and posters at the Globvac conference in 2017.



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Eight articles in newspapers have been written by Forum members on relevant topics for global health in the project period.

## 5. Financial report

Forum received support from the Research Council of Norway 2016-2018, 500 000 NOK per year, and the funding was spent like shown below.

The payroll and indirect expenses was used to run the secretariat.

Other operating expenses were mainly travels related to board meetings and board members attending the global health conferences. Some expenses were related to web pages and telephone conferences.

## Final accounts

### Actual costs (in NOK 1000)

Account	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Payroll and indirect expenses	233	250	267		750
Procurement of R&D services					0
Equipment					0
Other operating expenses	140	350	260		750
Sum	373	600	527	0	1500

## 6. Way forward - 2019

Forum is in a new situation. So far in 2019, we have

- Organized a new web page
- Established membership registration
- Had 3 board meetings
- Board members have participated in the scientific committee for the Global Health Conference in Bergen 2-3/4-19; with planning and evaluation of abstracts.
- Participated in one FESTMIH board meeting.
- Agreed to support the Norwegian Institute of Public Health in arranging the Globvac conference in 2020.

This has been possible due to good co-operation with Centre for International Health and the secretariat of Global Health Norway.

It is necessary to formalize the relationship between Global Health Norway. Forum need to continue the routine of having monthly board meetings. Forum should enrol more members.



Norwegian Forum  
for Global Health Research

Bergen, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019/B.E. Moen