

# GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR CHRONIC DISEASES



# ACHIEVEMENT REPORT 2023/24

# Message from our Chief Executive



*Dr Morven Roberts*

I am delighted to present this 2023/24 report on the activities and achievements of the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD). A year in which we are excited to be able to share the impact of our research more widely at major international events including the World Congress in NCDs in Toronto.

GACD remains a unique alliance of international funders and researchers at the forefront of delivering impactful implementation research that can inform current and future prevention and management of the huge global burden of chronic non communicable disease.

In this last year, we were excited to announce the outcomes of our 8th joint call for proposals, with 16 excellent international collaborative projects involving 24 countries/institutions focused on reducing NCD risk factors in underserved urban populations. Together, the GACD funding agencies have invested more than US\$38 million to make meaningful progress in addressing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in some of the most underserved communities across the world. Importantly in this year the GACD Strategy Board initiated a 'refresh' of our Strategic Plan for 2025-2030, in recognition of accelerated world change and impacts on NCDs. The Board invited a group of diverse, outstanding, international experts in chronic NCDs, implementation research, multi-sector working, community outreach, and policymaking to help guide our future research priorities. Their insights and recommendations have paved the way for an early announcement on our next three research call themes.

We nurture our ability to make meaningful impact, not only through the substantial research investment, but also as a result of the proactive sharing of knowledge and capability and the provision of training and networking events. The online GACD e-Hub is delivered in partnership with the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, and provides a substantial, free to access, resource in implementation science. Since its launch in 2021 it has attracted great interest and we are delighted to have supported a second phase of the e-Hub commencing 2023, developing content and enhancing accessibility for health professionals and researchers in low- and middle-income countries.

We are extremely grateful for the altruism of our GACD Research Network in sharing their knowledge and expertise during the training activities we host. In 2023, we held our 6th Implementation Science School (ISS) for early career researchers and were delighted to engage with the 38 successful trainees from 21 countries who secured a place in the virtual five-week school. We recognise that it will be the researchers closest to the issues who will be able to tackle the context laden challenges of NCD prevention and control worldwide.

GACD also successfully convened its Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) 2023 in Singapore. This meeting served as a platform for fruitful discussions, knowledge exchange, and the forging of new collaborations, further advancing our collective efforts to address NCDs on a global scale. I am delighted that the ASM this year has resulted in the creation of three new working and special interest groups.

I extend my gratitude to our international funding agencies, associate members, and the members of the GACD Research Network, and of course my dynamic team for their time and collective energy to ensure the research we support is productive and likely to have tangible impact.



## Who we are

Launched in 2009, GACD was the first (and remains the only) alliance of international research funding agencies committed to addressing the burden of chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) globally. Once again in 2023, GACD brought together twelve agencies whose senior representatives convene as our GACD Strategy Board.

Prof Sunny Collings (HRCNZ) was elected as the new Vice Chair of Strategy Board joining Dr Barbara Kerstiens (EC) the current Chair. The Board welcomed new representatives from existing funding agencies; Scientific Director Prof Márcio de Castro Silva Filho (FAPESP); CEO Prof Steve Wesselingh (NHMRC); and Director Dr Supakit Sirlak (HSRI).

On our Programme Subcommittee, there were also changes amongst our funder representation. We thanked Dr. Adam Chapman (NHMRC) stepping down and welcomed Dr Greg Owsianik (EC), as the new co-chair of the GACD Programme Subcommittee.

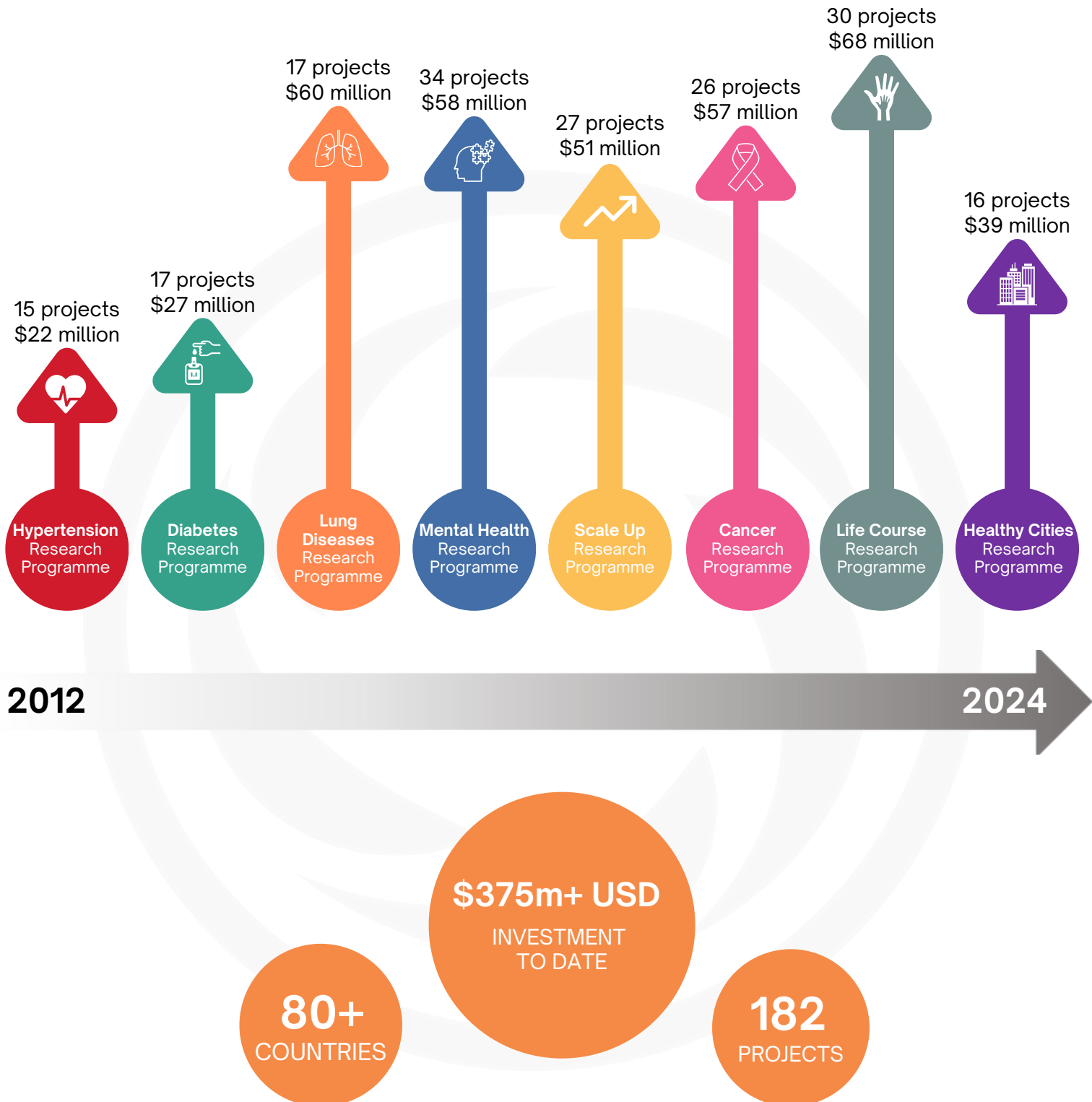
In September 2023, we also bid farewell to Prof Sir Nick Lemoine and thanked him for his sage and enthusiastic commitment as the Chair of our Board of Trustees, and welcomed our new Chair Prof Paul Moss, Director of Research and Knowledge Transfer at the Birmingham University, UK.

 <p>National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia</p>	 <p>Health Research Council (HRCNZ), New Zealand</p>
 <p>São Paulo, Research Foundation (FAPESP), Brazil</p>	 <p>South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)</p>
 <p>Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)</p>	 <p>Health Systems Research Institute (HSRI), Thailand</p>
 <p>Directorate General - Research and Innovation, European Commission (EC)</p>	 <p>UK Medical Research Council (MRC)</p>
 <p>Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)</p>	 <p>UK Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)</p>
 <p>Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED)</p>	 <p>US National Institutes of Health (NIH)</p>

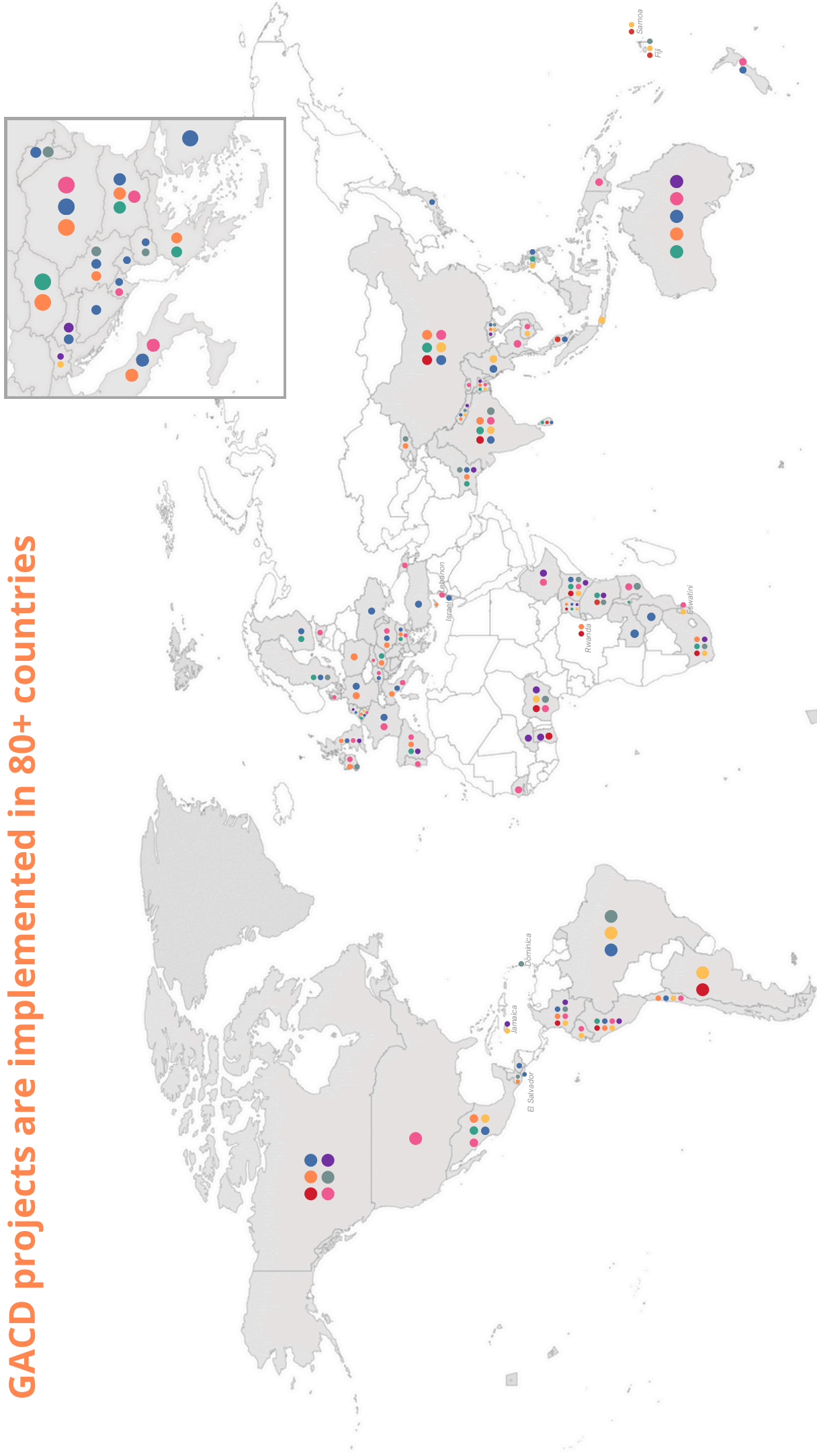
# Our research

Our multi-country, multi-disciplinary research focuses on the needs of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and vulnerable populations of high-income countries.

With awards made to our latest Healthy Cities joint call in 2023/24, our funding agencies have now supported 182 projects under the eight different GACD Research Programmes to date. This is a collective funding commitment of over USD \$375 million.



# GACD projects are implemented in 80+ countries



Countries in which GACD projects are being (or were) implemented are shown with dots; each colour represents the GACD Research Programme under which the projects were funded: **Hypertension**; **Diabetes**; **Lung Diseases**; **Mental Health**; **Scale Up**; **Cancer**; **Life Course**; **Healthy Cities**.

The boundaries, colours, denominations, and other information shown on any map in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of GACD concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.

# Showcasing GACD project impact

Some projects have completed and we are actively following them to understand how their research outcomes are making an impact. As their impact grows, we continue to disseminate and showcase their achievements through case studies and publications. The [case studies](#) can be found on our website, and publications from the GACD projects can be accessed on the [GACD publications portal](#).

## High-profile Lancet publication

The Inte-Africa GACD Scale up study **Integrated management of HIV, diabetes, and hypertension in sub-Saharan Africa** project [published](#) its main findings in the Lancet, highlighting the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of integrated health care for chronic high-burden conditions in Africa.

## Advancing global cancer research

In April 2023, GACD hosted a scientific session **Connecting for cancer control: Collective action through the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) network of implementation projects** at the virtual 11th Annual Symposium on Global Cancer Research, organised by the NIH National Cancer Institute.

The session highlighted the GACD Cancer Research Programme as an example of international collective action and included a lively panel discussion which drew on experience from projects within the GACD Cancer Research Programme.

## World Congress on NCDs

GACD took an opportunity to showcase three global GACD projects at the Third [World Congress on NCDs](#) in Toronto, Canada in June 2023 which provided a backdrop for our [symposium](#), **Interventions, implementation science, and impact – translating evidence into policy and practice**. The stimulating presentations and panel discussion spanning experiences from three continents inspired the audience.

The projects represented were:

- SU10 – *Evaluating and bringing to scale alternative food networks to address diabetes mellitus and hypertension in Ecuador* by Prof Malek Batal, l'Université de Montréal, Canada and Dr Myriam Paredes, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Sede Ecuador (FLACSO), Ecuador
- DM03 – *IINDIAGO: An integrated health system intervention aimed at reducing type 2 diabetes risk in disadvantaged women after gestational diabetes in South Africa* by Prof Christina Zarowsky, l'Université de Montréal, Canada and Prof Naomi (Dinky) S. Levitt, University of Cape Town, South Africa
- SU11 – *CHAP-P: Community Health Assessment Program for diabetes and cardiovascular health in the Philippines* by Prof Gina Agarwal, McMaster University, Canada and Dr Ricardo Angeles, McMaster University, Canada



*Margaret Bee, Senior Policy & Impact Manager at GACD moderates a session on **Unpicking practicalities of implementation projects** with panel members from left to right Prof Malek Batal, l'Université de Montréal, Canada; Prof Naomi (Dinky) S. Levitt, University of Cape Town, South Africa and Dr Ricardo Angeles, McMaster University, Canada*

*In 2023, there were 91 live projects still progressing through their research. Read more on our [project pages](#).*

Also in June, GACD co-sponsored a hybrid international conference Linking people, communities and primary healthcare: an essential approach for tackling NCDs and achieving Universal Health Coverage, with the SUNI-SEA project team. The conference used lessons learned from the research project Scaling-Up NCD Interventions in Southeast Asia as a starting point for reflection on how NCD prevention and management at primary healthcare and community levels contributes to achieving Universal Health Coverage.

**Other project dissemination events have included:**

- GACD co-hosted the PRESCRIP-TEC conference in January 2024: **Is elimination of cervical cancer feasible globally? Lessons learnt from PRESCRIP-TEC project.**
- GACD contributed to the **Diabetes: Community-led Awareness, Response & Evaluation (D:Clare) symposium and dissemination event** in February 2024.

## Strengthening research capacity and capability

### GACD supports research capacity strengthening in three key ways

- Embedded training and career progression within the research projects we fund
- The open-access, evidence-based GACD e-Hub online resource
- Dedicated training events such as our annual Implementation Science School

### The Sixth GACD Implementation Science School

In September, 38 trainees were selected to join the Sixth Implementation Science School. These trainees hailed from 20 different countries and encompassed 21 nationalities.

After the School, all survey participants expressed strong satisfaction and willingness to recommend it to others. The feedback revealed that attendees found the School to be informative and inspiring, motivating them to further explore implementation science.

### GACD capacity development at international conferences



GACD School Senior Faculty member Dr Zahra Aziz [presented a paper](#) on our Implementation Science School at the 16th Annual Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health in **December 2023**.

During the World Congress on NCDs in Toronto, Canada, GACD also contributed to a [dynamic NHLBI-CIHR training event](#) for early career researchers.



### The GACD Implementation Science e-Hub

The GACD [e-Hub](#) has rapidly become a core platform that underpins GACD training and resource sharing. To date, there have been 30,000+ views and 10,000 visitors from over 150 countries to the e-Hub. The contents of the e-Hub have also been adapted and utilised by universities, academics and other institutions for their programmes and workshops.

“*Through the GACD e-Hub, we are empowering researchers and implementers globally with the tools and knowledge necessary to make a real impact on NCD prevention and control.*”

**Prof Brian Oldenburg**  
Lead Researcher for the GACD e-Hub

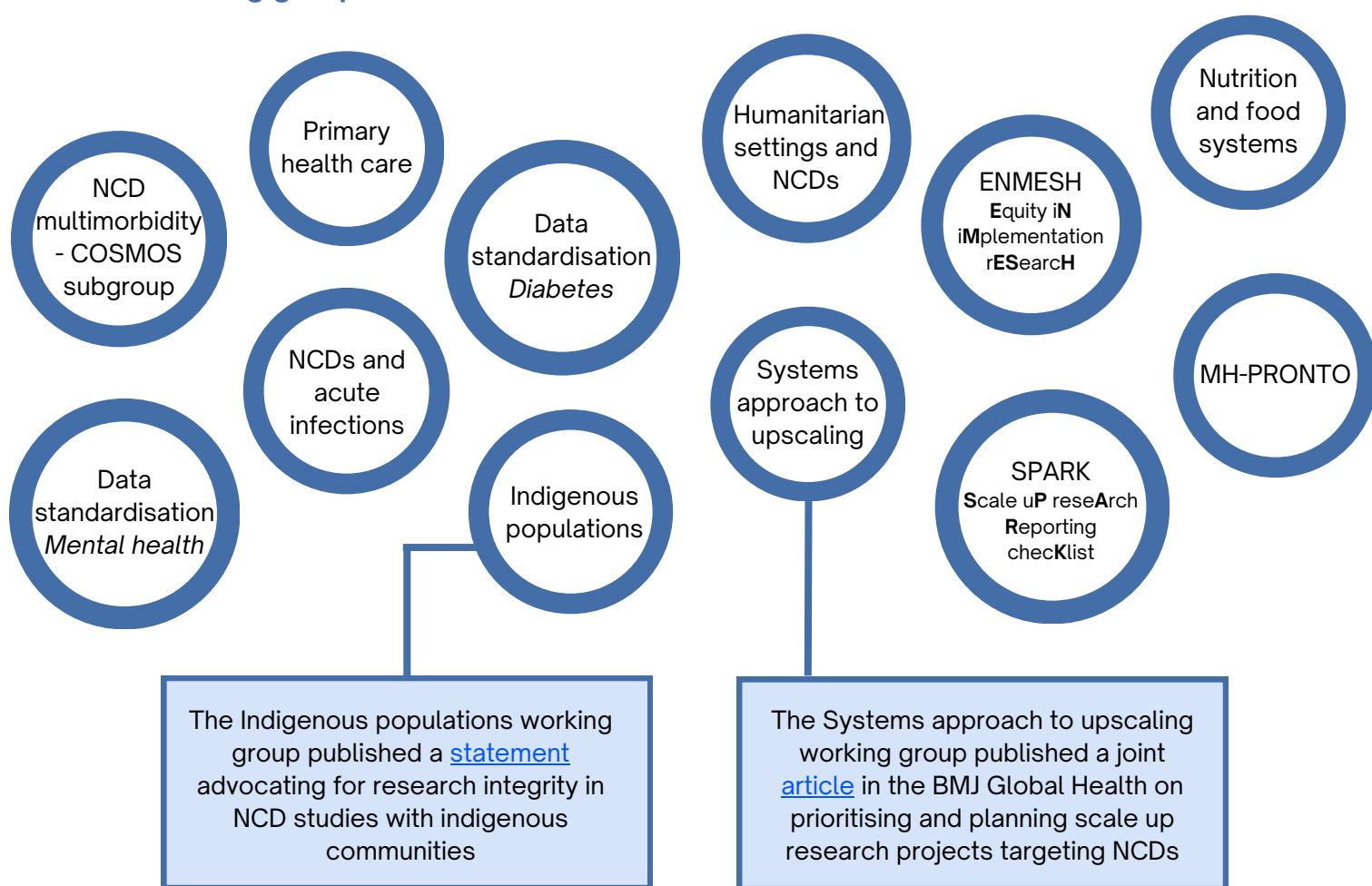
With the unique focus on global implementation science to improve the prevention and control of NCDs, the e-Hub acts as a central resource hub that links with other relevant toolkits, websites and online resources.

# Networking and collaboration

GACD aims to enhance our collective impact through networking and collaborative synergy, bringing together all members of GACD’s projects teams as the GACD Research Network. By 2023, the number of registered members has grown to more than 800, who share knowledge and know-how. Members participate at stimulating workshops, webinars and events throughout the year preparing and presenting thoughtful and thought-provoking discussions on topical issues.

Within our network, we not only engage members around similar health-related focus within our eight funded Research Programmes, but also nurture collaboration on cross-cutting themes through a variety of working groups. GACD has supported numerous working groups over the years, including the Indigenous Populations working group and NCD Multimorbidity working group.

## Active working groups in 2023



## Knowledge sharing events in 2023

- Our annual [mid-year workshop](#) on working with context to implement NCD programmes took place in June 2023
- The Research Programme Workshop brought together 50+ project teams to share updates in October 2023
- We hosted a [digital skills workshop](#) for researchers in creating health and science videos in September 2023

# Annual Scientific Meeting 2023 in Singapore

As a highlight networking event of the GACD year, the Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) brings together representatives from the GACD-funded projects and member agencies, as well as local researchers, policymakers and programme implementers to facilitate discussion and share learnings around implementation science.

In 2023, our eleventh ASM took place in Singapore from 14 to 16 November, bringing together 111 participants from 93 institutions spanning 31 countries.



Researchers at the Annual Scientific Meeting 2023

Over the three days, there were 30 speakers across 10 key sessions and a highlight of the meeting was a stimulating presentation from guest speaker Prof. Tazeen H. Jafar at the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore.

We introduced the inaugural film festival for this ASM. Members of the Research Network were invited to create a short film that influences, informs, or inspires their chosen audience, drawing on the work of their GACD project. The GACD Oscars were awarded to iSISTAQUIT Ngurrajili and EVO+ Colombia for their creativity and storytelling.

We also held our annual knowledge-sharing competition, with the Inte-Africa and CHAP-P teams adjudged as the winners by the judges and delegates.

We are delighted that the opportunity for vibrant discussion and engagement provided by the ASM has stimulated the formation of three new joint working and special interest groups: 1. Scale up research checklist working group, 2. Equity in implementation research working group and 3. Nutrition and food systems special interest group.



Winners of the Film Festival and the Knowledge Sharing Competition

“  
*It's the only meeting where I get to engage directly with the projects I support as a funder and I develop strong relationships with the investigators involved as a result.*

**GACD funder / ASM 2023 participant**



“  
*As a junior researcher attending the GACD meeting for the first time, I was deeply inspired to learn more, do more, and engage with a diverse group of researchers from around the world. The opportunity to learn from outstanding professionals who shared their fantastic work provided invaluable insights. It felt like home, and I am eagerly and enthusiastically looking forward to more engagement. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in such a dynamic and impactful gathering.*

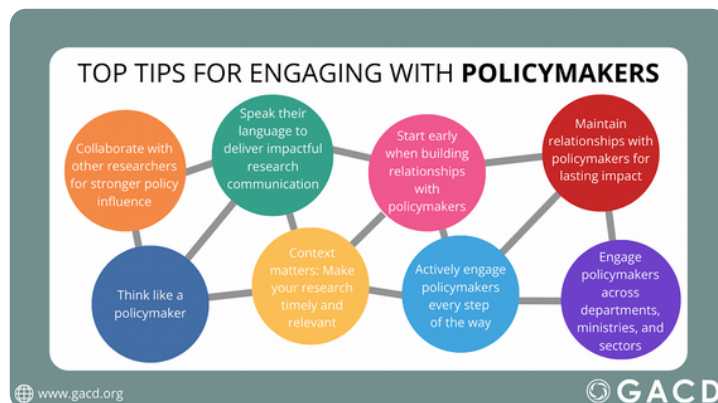
**Jackline Ngowi, International Global Health Scholar, Center for Global Health at Penn Medicine / ASM 2023 participant**

# Communicating our work

Communication plays a central role in our work. Over the year, the GACD team, in collaboration with the Research Network, has crafted, organised, and delivered multiple communications to showcase the efforts and influence of our researchers.

## Top tips for policymakers launched

GACD's Senior Impact & Policy Manager, Margaret Bee, drew on the vast expertise of the Research Network and synthesised their experiences into eight invaluable tips for researchers, providing insights on engaging with policymakers and influencing policy effectively.



## Other highlights

- Created monthly newsletters for our Research Network.
- GACD's CEO, Morven Roberts, presented at the Lancet Summit on childhood obesity and its consequences across the life course with a [comment](#) in the Lancet published in August 2023.
- Morven was also a featured panelist at the [WHO NCD Hard Talks](#) on **Rewriting the script for NCDs: Can implementation research change the game for policy and practice?** in February 2024.
- Collaborated with the Research Network and promoted a series of blogs on topical issues including [Mobilizing Communities for Hypertension Control](#) and [A New Era of Diabetes in Pregnancy Care: Indigenous Women Leading the Way](#).



Launch of the top tips for researchers during the ASM 2023



## GACD on social media

Our social media strategy is dynamic and impactful, comprising over 510 posts shared on our X (Twitter) and LinkedIn. The content mix included strategic use of daily social media posts and campaigns, particularly during World Days such as World Cancer and Hypertension Days, GACD and partner events. This extensive engagement resulted in over 250,500 impressions and 22,150 engagements, with a noticeable increase in followers to over 3,280 on X (Twitter), and 2,290 followers on LinkedIn.

If you would like to remain up to date with GACD activities, please contact [comms@gacd.org](mailto:comms@gacd.org)

Find us on the [WHO Knowledge Action Portal on NCDs](#)



GACD supports innovative research that will change non-communicable disease policy and practice around the world



**GACD**

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR CHRONIC DISEASES  
AN ALLIANCE OF HEALTH RESEARCH FUNDERS

X @gacd\_media  [www.gacd.org](http://www.gacd.org)

215 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE, UK

GACD is the working name for GACD Action, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered by the Charity Commission for England and Wales (Charity no. 1138223-22). GACD is a linked charity of the Medical Research Foundation which is registered in England and Wales (1138223) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 7366816).