

## GACD Strategic Plan 2019-2024

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### **Introduction**

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) affect people of all age groups, regions and countries. However, they disproportionately affect people in low- and middle-income countries and disadvantaged populations in high-income countries. The World Health Organization estimates the total annual number of deaths from NCDs will increase to 55 million by 2030, if “business as usual” continues<sup>1</sup>.

The Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) is a collaboration of health and medical research funding bodies. By investing in research, GACD aims to provide an evidence base that informs management of chronic diseases and policies to minimise the systematic and avoidable differences in the health status of different population groups within and between countries.

### **Mission**

GACD’s mission is to reduce the burden of chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in low- and middle-income countries, and in populations facing conditions of vulnerability in high-income countries, by building evidence to inform national and international NCD policies and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals under section 3.4<sup>2</sup>. We do this by:

- **Investing** in impactful NCD research
- **Building** implementation science capacity and capability in relation to NCDs
- **Facilitating** collaborations and partnerships to support GACD investment

### ***Invest...***

GACD invests in research to reduce health inequities resulting from NCDs, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries. Through this investment, GACD advances the development of high-quality evidence to inform the implementation of NCD prevention and management policies to lessen the burden of NCDs.

GACD recognises that effective interventions are available to address many NCDs and yet these interventions are not being implemented to lower the disease burden. As such, GACD reaffirms its priority to fund implementation research into NCDs. Implementation research focuses on the methods and strategies to ensure the uptake of proven interventions into routine practice, aiming to improve the quality and effectiveness of health services and care and ultimately population health.

Implementation research is at the core of GACD joint calls for applications. Investing in implementation research allows GACD to focus on enhancing understanding of the impact of socioeconomic, cultural, geopolitical and policy factors that shape the effectiveness and scalability of interventions. It also brings researchers across multiple disciplines, policymakers, practitioners, patients, and the community together to jointly address how to bring about sustainable change for the improvement of health outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd\\_report2010/en/](https://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd_report2010/en/)

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. 2015. Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved on 23 January 2019 from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>.

### ...in research priorities

GACD's previous disease-based research investment strategy advanced the management of some of the most common NCDs including hypertension, diabetes, lung diseases and mental health.<sup>3</sup> These disease-focused calls revealed a growing demand for cross-cutting topics to take comprehensive measure against NCDs. Therefore, GACD recognises the importance of investing in cross-cutting research in order to address some of the most complex drivers and implications of NCDs. Throughout the duration of the strategic plan, GACD will address the prevention and diagnosis of cancer and other NCDs; address the determinants and common-risk factors for NCDs (e.g., nutrition); and enhance the understanding of systems and services to manage multi-morbidities. As a fundamental activity of the Alliance, GACD will run one joint call for applications every one to two years, depending on member agencies' resources and the timing of funding cycles.

### **Build...**

GACD will invest time and resources to enhance researchers' capacity and capability to conduct scientifically rigorous and impactful implementation research that builds evidence on the effective prevention and management of NCDs and to facilitate its sustainable and broad uptake and integration into policy and practice.

### ...through research grants

GACD funding agencies will support capacity building, knowledge creation, translation and implementation, through grants that are awarded under the *Invest* objective. Future calls for research will further encourage funded projects to include students and early- and mid-career researchers in the applicant team, to provide opportunities for these researchers to engage in GACD and other implementation science training activities, and to mentor them in NCD implementation research.

In addition, individual GACD funding agencies may also offer research funding to:

- provide supplemental funding (on a competitive basis) to research teams for dissemination and uptake of evidence into policy and practice in collaboration with other projects.
- build capability to work with partners and engage in implementation research and knowledge translation activities.

### ...through enabling environments

Complementing its research grants, GACD will also facilitate implementation science capacity and capability development across academic, policy and research funding communities by:

- continuing to host and strengthen the **GACD Annual Scientific Meeting** to further showcase GACD research, enhance implementation science skills and build networks of researchers, policymakers and GACD funding agencies.
- running implementation research **training workshops, webinars and an online training platform** to raise awareness among policymakers of the benefits of implementation science in informing NCD policy and to build capability and capacity among researchers.

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.gacd.org>

## **Facilitate...**

GACD is an alliance of research funders. To build its profile as a **global leader in implementation research to inform NCD interventions and policy decisions**, GACD will facilitate partnerships and collaborations among researchers, policymakers, and research funders in government and other sectors.

### **...through research coordination**

In addition to its current research coordination activities, GACD will:

- Further **support GACD members** and continue to enhance the funding and peer review processes by fostering the co-funding of research applications, expanding the GACD international joint peer review of applications and further simplifying the application submission and review process through refining the shared grant application portal.
- Continue to support the **GACD Research Network** to facilitate further collaboration among researchers and outputs such as reports and meta-analyses.

### **...through partnerships and networks**

Since its inception in 2009, GACD's expansion has enabled important implementation research in NCDs across the globe. Further considered expansion of GACD membership will enable the benefits of the GACD to reach additional regions significantly impacted by NCDs and increase its overall impact.

In addition to enhancing coordination among existing members and engaging research funding agencies from currently unserved regions, GACD will:

- Consider innovative approaches to **building partnerships** across diverse sectors to enable scale-up, and creating mechanisms for funder participation to expand the types of organisations that can participate in its funding activities.
- Draw on current and alumni researchers, to create a **virtual network of NCD implementation researchers**. This community of experts will be a resource for researchers and policymakers seeking advice on implementation research. These networks and partnerships will help to facilitate the translation of research into policies and daily practice.

### **...through media engagement**

A variety of media will be used to publicise and disseminate the outcomes of GACD research.

- **Social media and video** to increase the profile of GACD's implementation research and outcomes on NCDs and its importance in the success of the global NCD response.
- **Scientific journals and popular media** to cement GACD place as a leading voice on NCD implementation research and to raise GACD's international profile.
- **Dissemination products** such as policy briefs, reports, fact sheets and meta-analyses to support GACD's mission.

## Summary

<b>Invest</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Through a series of funding calls invest in high quality collaborative implementation research on NCDs that generates evidence to inform changes in policy and practice.</li><li>2. Develop an evidence base that can shape policy and build robust programs to reduce health inequities resulting from NCDs.</li></ol>
<b>Build</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Enhance capacity of the academic sector in LMICs and HICs – across a range of scientific disciplines and career stages – to conduct implementation research on NCDs and contribute to the uptake of evidence to policy and practice.</li><li>2. Utilise enabling environments to strengthen capability among policymakers to engage with implementation research and researchers, and to understand and apply evidence to the development of NCD policies and programs at all levels.</li></ol>
<b>Facilitate</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Develop dissemination products to share the evidence from both the GACD Research Programmes and systematic reviews.</li><li>2. Develop a network of collaborative relationships with implementation funders, and partners to facilitate the identification and scale-up of promising interventions from GACD programmes.</li></ol>