

**Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine  
Guiding Principles for Global Engagement  
December 2024**

The Faculty of Medicine commits to advancing the global agenda for health equity and sustainability by integrating the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) into education, research, community service, and partnerships. We will equip our students, residents, faculty and staff with the knowledge and skills to address the interconnected health challenges of today's world, advocate for sustainable health policies, and foster global collaborations for health solutions that benefit all.

When Dalhousie's Faculty of Medicine seeks to engage in global health and international work, it is crucial to adhere to a set of guiding principles that prioritize ethical, sustainable, and impactful contributions to health systems and communities worldwide. These principles provide a framework for ensuring that global engagement initiatives are conducted with respect, equity, and a focus on long-term improvement. Below are some key guiding principles:

**1. Equity and Social Justice**

- Global health work must prioritize reducing health disparities and addressing the social determinants of health (such as poverty, education, and access to clean water).
- Interventions should focus on empowering communities and respecting local leadership, ensuring that all populations, especially vulnerable groups, benefit from global health efforts.
- Promote health equity by considering the structural and systemic inequalities that impact health outcomes globally.

**2. Collaboration and Partnership**

- Work in partnership with local health professionals, governments, and organizations to ensure that projects are culturally relevant and responsive to the community's needs.
- Build sustainable relationships that empower local stakeholders, rather than creating dependency on foreign aid.
- Support South-South cooperation, recognizing that low- and middle-income countries often have valuable knowledge and expertise to share.

**3. Respect for Local Context and Culture**

- Understand and respect local traditions, customs, and health beliefs. Interventions should be culturally appropriate and integrate local knowledge and practices.
- Promote local ownership of health initiatives, ensuring that communities are actively involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects.
- Acknowledge and adapt to local health system challenges, resources, and infrastructure limitations.

**4. Sustainability and Capacity Building**

- Aim to build local capacity rather than creating temporary solutions. This includes training local health professionals, strengthening health systems, and developing infrastructure.
- Interventions should be designed with long-term sustainability in mind, with clear plans for how projects will continue to function after external support ends.
- Ensure that efforts to improve health are environmentally sustainable and do not deplete local resources.

### **5. Ethical and Transparent Practice**

- Prioritize the ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice in all global health work.
- Uphold the highest standards of transparency in the management of resources, ensuring accountability to both funders and the local communities being served.
- Ensure that research and interventions are guided by ethical review boards and that informed consent is obtained when appropriate.

### **6. Evidence-Based and Data-Driven Approaches**

- Implement health interventions based on solid scientific evidence, ensuring that interventions are appropriate, effective, and informed by the latest global health research.
- Collect and analyze data to monitor the outcomes of health initiatives and adjust as necessary. This includes evaluating the social, economic, and health impact of research and projects.
- Use data to inform policy decisions and advocate for evidence-based practices in global health.

### **7. Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

- Global health problems are complex and multi-faceted, requiring collaboration across disciplines beyond medicine, such as public health, social sciences, economics, and policy.
- Encourage interdisciplinary teaching, research, and practice that addresses the broad spectrum of factors influencing health, including environmental, economic, political, and cultural determinants.
- Engage with global health professionals, activists, and organizations from diverse sectors to create holistic solutions.

### **8. Community Engagement and Empowerment**

- Ensure that global health projects are community-driven, with local populations involved in decision-making from the outset.
- Engage communities in the co-design of interventions, incorporating local knowledge and expertise into health programs.
- Foster community resilience by supporting local health leadership and encouraging self-reliance through capacity-building initiatives.

### **9. Health Systems Strengthening**

- Focus on building strong, resilient health systems that can respond to a wide range of health challenges, including infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, and maternal and child health.
- Address systemic issues such as health financing, workforce development, and equitable access to essential medicines and technologies.
- Work toward improving the integration of services, such as primary care and mental health, to ensure a holistic approach to health.

### **10. Global Advocacy**

- Acknowledge that global health challenges are interconnected and that solutions require collective action from governments, international organizations, and civil society.
- Advocate for policies that prioritize global health equity, including fair access to vaccines, treatments, and health technologies.
- Support global initiatives that address health emergencies, pandemics, and other cross-border health threats through coordinated international responses.

### **11. Education, Training, and Capacity Development**

- Promote global health education at all levels, from undergraduate medical students to postgraduate and faculty development, emphasizing the importance of cultural competence, global health ethics, and interdisciplinary approaches.
- Encourage faculty and students to engage in global health internships, research, and community service to deepen their understanding of the challenges and solutions in different contexts.
- Support the development of leadership skills in global health for students and emerging health professionals, fostering a new generation of global health advocates.

### **12. Research and Innovation**

- Engage in and support research that seeks innovative solutions to global health challenges, particularly those that affect low-resource settings.
- Ensure that research is conducted with the highest ethical standards and that findings are shared equitably with the global community.
- Focus on translating research into practice, ensuring that scientific discoveries have tangible impacts on improving health outcomes.

### **Summary**

Incorporating these guiding principles into global health work through a Faculty of Medicine is essential for creating meaningful, respectful, and sustainable impacts. By grounding engagement in equity, partnership, and ethical practices, institutions can contribute to a more just and healthy global community. These principles also ensure that medical professionals, students, and researchers gain valuable experiences and insights into global health challenges, preparing them to be leaders in both local and international health systems.

Do you have questions or want to learn more? Please contact [gho@dal.ca](mailto:gho@dal.ca)