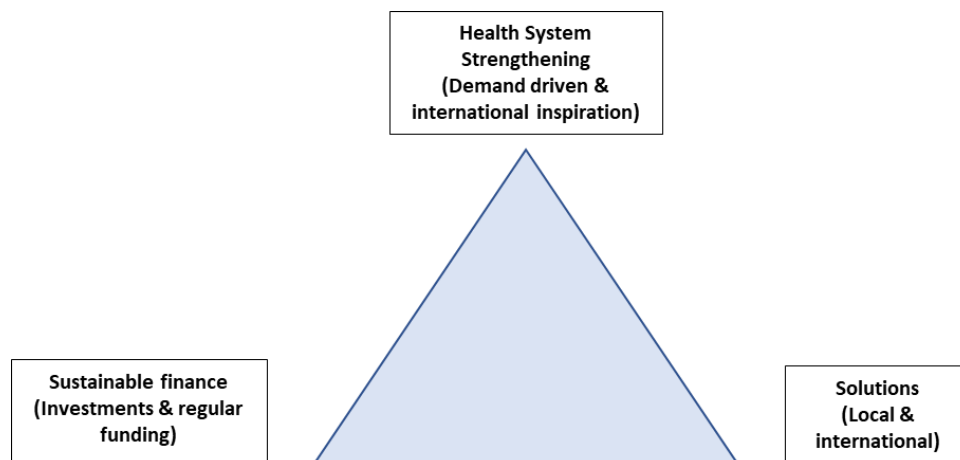


## **Internet consultation Global Health Strategy** **Input Task Force Health Care (TFHC) – 20 July 2022**

In April 2022, the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) presented her advice for the development of a Dutch Global Health Strategy. This has resulted in series of consultations with Dutch and foreign stakeholders in the field of Global Health, organized by the Dutch Government. Through this position paper, Task Force Health Care (TFHC – [www.tfhc.nl](http://www.tfhc.nl)), the platform founded by the Dutch life sciences & health business community, knowledge institutions and NGOs with international activities, formulates its input, and that of its members, on the questions raised in the internet consultation. This position paper is in addition to the active contributions that we, and our partners, have provided throughout the various sessions organized.

### **Improve the intersection between health system strengthening, solutions and finance**

Global Health is an extremely broad topic that encompasses many different aspects. Although the questions for input are organized around seven key areas, we would like to stress the importance of an integrated approach in which three key areas are interlinked.



### ***Health system strengthening (Demand driven & international inspiration)***

TFHC fully concurs that Dutch efforts in global health should be demand-driven and concurrently take into account the unique expertise that the Netherlands has to offer. Healthcare systems worldwide are currently under enormous pressure due to rapidly increased demands for care. The local needs and policies for healthcare come together in the key area of Health System Strengthening. Local policies, structures and healthcare demands should be the starting point of any intervention. At the same time, inspiration can be provided to local policymakers and key opinion leaders on what the future of healthcare might look like, or how innovative approaches have worked out in other countries across the globe.



TFHC regularly organizes incoming health delegations to the Netherlands as part of the public-private cooperation. For instance, with incoming delegations from countries like Kenya, Nigeria, Colombia or the ASEAN region, to name but a few. A good example of providing inspiration and reflection on health system strengthening is the World of Health Care ([www.wohc.nl](http://www.wohc.nl)). A yearly event where stakeholders in healthcare from 30+ countries from across globe visit the Netherlands to learn about the Dutch approach, exchange experiences and share knowledge. This also provides an excellent platform to showcase the unique expertise that the Netherlands has to offer. Such an event, bringing together key stakeholders could also be organized in Africa. In the past preliminary discussion on such ideas took place, but funding was lacking.

### ***Solutions (Local & International)***

To strengthen healthcare systems, innovative solutions that are suitable in a country's context need to be implemented. Dutch healthcare solutions are highly innovative, and the Netherlands has particular expertise in the field of digital technology and logistics, but also in many other (niche) aspects of the healthcare system. At Task Force Health Care, we combine forces of entrepreneurs (private sector), NGOs, knowledge institutes, healthcare providers (UMCs), and public players such as the Ministries of Health, Foreign Affairs and Economic Affairs. What makes our approach unique, is that we work with the same group of local organizations in the recipient countries. Dutch solutions should be aligned to local priorities and needs, we work closely together with grassroots NGO to reach marginalized groups, we strengthen the knowledge of local institutions and foster collaboration between healthcare providers and university medical centers for research. Working together with local private sector players and home-grown solutions has proven to be difficult thus far. One the one hand because (international) standards of interoperability is not always met. On the other hand, because financial instruments or the financing of the healthcare system does not cater for such innovative collaboration.

When asking what is necessary to improve local research and production medical supplies, medicines and vaccines, it is important to understand what the goal of improving local production is. The private sector can contribute to the production and distributions of medical supplies, medicines and vaccines, by recognizing and utilizing the possibilities that are present already present in countries. Investments in local production naturally follow from the present potential in a country. In addition, increasing local knowledge on service and maintenance of medical products is necessary to ensure sustainability of implementations.

Improving local research and production of medical supplies, medicines and vaccines, especially in the African context is needed, but not easy. Economic factors, cost-efficient production and the size of (fragmented) African healthcare markets come into play. The competition for local (and Dutch) medical supplies (especially for disposables and low-end solutions) from especially India and China is fierce. Investment in high end production facilities e.g., local vaccine production makes only sense if international (EU) standards are met and with regional production centers.



In terms of maintenance of equipment and healthcare facilities local service providers would be a great addition to what the Netherlands has to offer. However, current financial instrument mainly focuses on covering Capex investments, rather than life-time investments and maintenance.

### ***Sustainable finance (Investments & regular funding)***

Lastly, to strengthen a health system, sufficient, predictable and smart financing is essential. Solutions including national or local insurance schemes or sustainable business models need to be further explored and utilized. An approach to health system strengthening that includes both solutions and finance is therefore imperative for sustainable development of health systems. Many healthcare systems are still based on a *fee for service* model, rather than a *value-based* approach. Engaging in a dialogue with local policymakers on the pros and cons of these various approaches is crucial to make

Many healthcare financing systems ensure that contradictions in the system are sustained. For instance, innovate (preventive) digital solutions geared towards primary healthcare (gatekeeper function) could provide access to healthcare for hard-to-reach marginalized groups, while at the same time preventing an overflow of demand and pressure on hospitals. However, as long as the system only pays for services rendered by a doctor, there is no business case for these kinds of solutions. And thus, preventing investment by private sector actors in these kinds of solutions.

This is but one example in with Health System Strengthening (policies), Innovative (local) solutions, and financing interact. We need to acknowledge and address the interaction between these key areas if we want to ensure blending of public and private funding for the Global Health Strategy.

### **Adopt a broader view than SRHR and expand Dutch Global Health policy**

Dutch organizations and institutions with healthcare expertise are often particularly active abroad. On the one hand to innovate internationally, on the other hand to use acquired knowledge and skills to make healthcare systems stronger and more resilient. The contributions and interaction of Dutch organizations in the global health sphere is much broader and wider than only on the topic of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). TFHC acknowledges and applauds the specific role as a ‘donor with courage’ that the Dutch government plays in these field. However, so many opportunities are missed, and Dutch knowledge and expertise is underutilized because of a fixation on this topic.

We would recommend that, as part of the new Global Health Strategy, additional attention and support should be given to the interaction between health system strengthening, innovative solutions and financing as described above. In some cases, this might be very well applicable to SRHR, but a broader view is needed to ensure well-functioning health care systems. Current instruments are too fragmented and difficult to apply. Especially to scale or to replicate initiatives, or for innovative (digital / integral) approaches. Dutch organizations have expertise in such an integral approach where various actors work together in a ‘Dutch diamond approach’. A broader scope with a holistic approach and a



wider spectrum of valuable Dutch contributions is needed to contribute to global health objectives.

### **Utilize and strengthen existing networks for cooperation**

The AIV advice included national and international coherence as a building block for the new strategy. The AIV recommends establishing a platform for relevant Dutch stakeholders in which they can cooperate to tackle global health challenges with common goals, strategic priorities and leading principles. For 25 years, 'Task Force Health Care' is the Dutch platform committed to joining forces nationally for international cooperation to global healthcare challenges in which Dutch expertise and innovations can make a difference. The platform brings together the business community, knowledge institutions, NGOs, governments, healthcare providers and financiers. The recognition of the importance of global health and the establishment of the connection with the overall Dutch Top Sector LSH will result in a multiplication of this accumulated knowledge, expertise and activity.

TFHC was one of the driving forces behind the international strategy of the Topsector Life Sciences and Health (Health~Holland): [www.health-holland.com/internationalisation](http://www.health-holland.com/internationalisation). The Health~Holland International Strategy adopts an integral approach making best use of the Dutch diamond approach. We recommend that the Global Health Strategy is aligned with this strategy.

A great deal of expertise and knowledge has already been gained and is available from both public and private actors. More and more valuable coordination is taking place between these actors. To make use of the specific knowledge and experience of all different sectors involved in global health, a new Global Health Strategy should focus on increasing capacity and resources for strengthening Dutch public-private initiatives that contribute to global health in a sustainable and inclusive manner. TFHC works intensively together with all public actors, both in the Netherlands, as well as abroad.

A good example where the international public-private efforts are aligned is the LSH Roadmap for the United States. Drafted in close public-private collaboration, under the guidance of the VWS attaché in Washington a coherent approach on the interaction between the United States and the Netherlands has been drafted. A similar approach could be followed for regions in Africa, e.g., East-Africa – one of the long-term priority regions of the Topsector LSH. The approach should be reinforced based, amongst others, on the outcomes of the ongoing evaluation of public-private trade promotion (NL Works / T&I NL / NLinBusiness), and building on the strengths of existing organizations, such as the Task Force Health Care.

