

2022 G-FINDER report highlights the inadequacy of global health R&D funding: GHTC offers key takeaways for the global health community

The release of the 2022 G-FINDER report sheds light on current funding trends in global health research and development (R&D). Despite hard-won advocacy victories by GHTC and the global health advocacy community, neglected diseases are living up to their moniker from a funding standpoint, as global investment in HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), malaria, and neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) remains far below levels required to overcome these persistent and devastating health threats. The new report highlights several new and ongoing funding trends. GHTC has identified three findings of particular importance to the global health research community.

Funding for NTDs dropped precipitously; funding shortfalls for HIV/AIDS, malaria, and TB persist.

Funding for NTDs included within the G-FINDER scope decreased by 10 percent in 2021, falling to their lowest total since 2009. NTDs impact more than a billion people each year, disproportionately afflicting women and children. The reduction in funding is particularly alarming given that many of the targets set in the WHO roadmap on NTDs (2012-2020) have not been met.

Outside of NTDs, funding for malaria saw a substantial 5.7 percent dip, HIV/AIDS investment experienced a modest uptick of 2.7 percent, and TB funding remained virtually flat, dipping less than a tenth of a percent. While these three diseases receive more resources than NTDs, their funding levels are significantly below that which is needed to overcome these health crises and reach global health and development targets, like the Sustainable Development Goals.

Funding for Product Development Partnerships (PDPs) declined for the fourth consecutive year.

PDPs are the leading engines of medical innovation for diseases that lack sufficient commercial market incentives. Thus, it is distressing to see that neglected disease R&D funding for PDPs fell by 18 percent in 2021, continuing a multiyear backslide. Current PDP funding sits 40 percent below its peak, which was 13 G-FINDER cycles ago. The most recent dip was driven by reduced investment from large donors like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). These findings also highlight the need to further diversify funding sources for PDPs, as well as global health R&D more broadly.

Specifically on the US government funding front, PDP funding was not the only area in which USAID funding declined. Neglected disease R&D funding from the agency reached a record low, further highlighting the need for additional mechanisms within USAID to facilitate supporting medical innovations for unmet needs. During the virtual launch event for the report, keynote speaker Dr. Peter Hotez noted the vital role that US agencies like USAID and the US National Institutes for Health play in the global health R&D ecosystem.

Funding for platform technologies and non-disease-specific investment is on the rise.

For the seventh consecutive year, funding for non-disease specific (NDS) R&D increased, rising by 5.6 percent. Specifically, investment in platform technologies grew for the fourth consecutive year and now accounts for 22 percent of NDS funding. Much of the past year's growth was buoyed by an increase in

drug-related platform technologies, which historically received the smallest share of funding. This trend dovetails with a larger shift of investments toward drugs, as overall drug R&D funding eclipsed vaccine R&D funding for the first time in 2021.

Overall, the global health advocacy community has made incredible strides in protecting and growing funding for global health innovation. This past year in the United States, GHTC helped support the passage of a global health research-friendly fiscal year 2023 omnibus package, which included significant funding increases across nearly every line relevant to global health R&D, as well as complimentary directives that will support global health R&D across several agencies. However, the challenges of competing global interests and tough funding environments are formidable, as shown by the G-FINDER report.

This coming year presents a number of strong opportunities to elevate attention and support for resources for global health innovation, including United Nations High-Level Meetings on TB and universal health coverage. We urge leaders around the world to step up and invest in lifesaving global health R&D, and our advocacy community partners to continue to hold the world accountable for ensuring health and health equity for all.