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## Geneva Forum Towards Global Access to Health

# Globalization, Crisis, and Health Systems: Confronting Regional Perspectives

Third Edition

19 – 21 April 2010

International Conference Centre Geneva, Switzerland



## Evaluation Report

## INTRODUCTION

Jointly organized by the University Hospitals of Geneva, the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva, and the Geneva Health Forum Association, the Geneva Health Forum (GHF) partners with the major international organizations active in health in Geneva and around the world to bring together the many stakeholders in global access to health – from actors in the field to policy-makers. The GHF, as a developing global network for international and inter-sectoral dialogue, has the vision of facilitating the strengthening of health systems and basic health services, thus striving to keep global access to health active on the international agenda.

## THE 2010 EDITION:

### GLOBALIZATION, CRISIS, AND HEALTH SYSTEMS: CONFRONTING REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Over the last decade, global health has undergone substantial transformations: initially a somewhat neglected political field, global health issues have acquired prominence among States, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and non-State actors. This momentum, however, is currently challenged by four crises – the food, fuel, economic, and climate crises – the full effects of which are still unfolding. These crises jeopardize some recent health accomplishments, and further exacerbate the strains on healthcare services, health professionals, and local communities. Pandemics, the rise of non-communicable diseases, the increasing mobility of health professionals, and the rapid diversification of actors in the health sector are examples of such challenges that call for more comprehensive and integrated approaches.

The title of the 2010 edition, 'Globalization, Crisis, and Health Systems: Confronting Regional Perspectives', expresses the need for change and action to improve global access to health and care in a context of global interdependence and economic instability.

### THEMATIC AXES OF THE GHF 2010 – A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PROCESS

In addition to open consultations with partner institutions and an online questionnaire to develop the GHF 2010 thematic axes, the GHF launched an online collaborative tool, the [globalaccesstohealth.net](http://globalaccesstohealth.net) platform (GAHP) to help develop the scientific programme. The GAHP also offers the entire GHF community a working and collaborative space to exchange information and experience.

During the Forum, a session dedicated to web-based communities featured the presentation of the GAHP, allowing participants to discuss important issues about web-based communities, including what they offer health professionals, how their impact on strengthening health systems can be measured, and the necessary elements that make online communities successful.



## GHF 2010 THEMES

### *HEALTH GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES*

- Role of Europe in global health governance within current power shifts
- 'Health in all policies' and health impact assessment
- Use of social determinants of health as a guide for policy
- Impact of global health initiatives

### *HEALTH THREATS AND ACCESS TO HEALTH AT TIMES OF CRISIS*

- Health crises and urban settings
- Ethical issues in pandemic preparedness
- Humanitarian paradigm in crisis?
- Health systems during conflict and recovery
- Local impacts of economic crisis on health systems

### *TRADE, MARKETS, AND HEALTH*

- Trade in health-related goods and services
- Privatization of health systems and the role of public services
- Impact of trade agreements (TRIPS) on health systems

### *HEALTHCARE DELIVERY AND ACCESS TO MEDICINES*

- Neglected diseases
- Innovative healthcare for chronic diseases
- New threats to access to medicines: drug resistance, counterfeits, etc.
- Health workforce: task shifting
- Primary healthcare: measuring progress
- Community participation in health systems
- Access to emergency obstetric care
- Hospitals: new challenges in the context of globalization

### *HEALTH INFORMATION, TRAINING, AND TECHNOLOGIES*

- Data collection and health information systems
- Telemedicine and E-learning
- E-health and self-informed patients
- Web-based networks for health professionals
- Education in global health

### *MOBILITY AND MIGRATION*

- Access to health for migrants
- War, regional conflicts, and internally displaced persons
- Road traffic injury and impact on health systems

## GHF 2010 – MANAGING SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

This edition of the GHF was given a particularly unexpected challenge: the dates of the GHF (19-21 April 2010) correspond precisely with those of the volcanic eruptions in Iceland, which led to the forced grounding of all aircraft throughout Europe, and a generalized aviation crisis worldwide. The Geneva Health Forum 2010 – with 83 countries represented in its registrations – nonetheless went ahead with its programme. Despite the crisis, 573 participants of the over 1000 registered were indeed able to attend.



These circumstances provided an incredible sense of solidarity and engagement among all those who were able to attend in person. Many participants travelled long distances by car and by train. Some participants from Asia and Africa arrived fortuitously a day or two before the crisis, while others managed to take flights that literally brought them around the world, before landing in a taxi in a nearby country to arrive at the Forum. Speakers that were unable to attend were able to participate via videoconferencing in 13 cases, and all participants were able to access 17 sessions webcast live via the RAFT network.

Each day, the organizing committee – following the itineraries of each of the 239 speakers and chairs – reworked the programme where necessary. Of the 50 sessions originally scheduled, only 6 were ultimately cancelled or merged with other sessions.

## THE 2010 AND PREVIOUS EDITIONS: A FEW NUMBERS

### Comparative table GHF 2006 – GHF 2008 – GHF 2010

	2006	2008	2010
Participants	962	902	1036 (573*)
Countries represented	62	99	83 (47*)
Abstracts submitted	179	396	358
Travel grants and free registrations low income countries	63	105	135 (32*)
Plenary Sessions	6	10	6
Parallel Sessions	23	36	40 (34*)
Symposia / lunch sessions	2	2	4
Public Events	1	3	2
Free communication sessions	12	18	n.a. **
Live webcast sessions	0	1	17
Registered GHF Hubs	0	0	39
Posters	115	230	201
Marketplace organizations	47	66	53 (52*)

\* Actual numbers as compared to those foreseen, due to the aviation crisis.

\*\* Free communication sessions were integrated into the official programme for the 2010 edition.

## SELECTED GHF HIGHLIGHTS

### Opening Ceremony with Alberto Cairo: A Poignant Testimony

After the official keynote addresses, Alberto Cairo, of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Afghanistan, recounted his long-standing commitment to the ICRC orthopaedic centre. His testimony brought the audience to the heart of the field as he portrayed years of work with disabled persons in Kabul – initially those disabled during the war but ultimately all those who were disabled, regardless of the cause. His humble messages included a reminder of the importance of aid in helping communities to rebuild themselves and reclaim self-sufficiency.



### Haitian Perspective on the Earthquake Crisis



The Haiti earthquake crisis has led to worldwide debate over the efficacy of emergency medical assistance and a critical assessment of collaboration in crisis management between external and local institutions. With the support of the Eagle Foundation, the GHF invited Marlane Thomson, Head Nurse; Augustin Willer, resident at the Surgery Department; and Franck Telemaque, Head of Surgery Department and Coordinator of International Aid, Haiti University

Hospital, to participate in a debate over the Haiti crisis. Their testimony encouraged international aid to continue with a view to establishing autonomy. The debate called for greater coordination of aid in crisis situations and an international protocol.

### Professor Barry Bloom: Thinking Ahead

Eminent professor of public health at the Department of Immunology and Infectious Diseases from the Harvard School of Public Health (USA), Barry Bloom was virtually present at the closing ceremony with a thought-provoking presentation on the changing nature of global health and new opportunities for academics and educational institutions. He depicted a worrisome current global health architecture with its plethora of actors and competing agendas, arguing that 'global health is currently a space without clear rules and obvious governance'. Professor Bloom then suggested a set of reforms for current Official Development Aid (ODA) to better align with local priorities and contribute to the strengthening of health systems. The presentation ended with a proposed research agenda for academic institutions in both developed and developing countries engaged in global health.



### VIDEOCONFERENCES AND WEBCASTS... GHF CONNECTING TO THE WORLD

The format of the 2010 Geneva Health Forum aimed at creating an environment conducive to building coalitions across regional, political, sectoral, and cultural boundaries. The format included plenary, parallel, and lunch sessions, 17 of which were webcast live via the RAFT network. The 2010 edition planned for these 17 sessions to be broadcast to registered groups (GHF Hubs) around the world. These GHF Hubs, which required simply a location with internet access and sufficient space for welcoming several to many participants, registered in advance free of charge and engaged in welcoming participants in their local areas.



With the aviation crisis and its repercussions on participants travelling from afar, the GHF took the initiative of webcasting the 17 planned hub sessions openly on the GHF 2010 website, rather than exclusively to the registered GHF Hubs. All registered participants were notified of the possibility of connecting to these sessions – with the option of posting questions to the moderators by a simple 'blog' system. These sessions were hosted on the RAFT network website: <http://raft.hcuge.ch/hub.htm> and are still available online.

### TRAVEL GRANTS: GIVING A VOICE TO ACTORS FROM THE FIELD

**Number of official travel grants for low and lower-middle income countries: 57 (17\*)**

**Number of free registrations offered to participants from low and lower-middle income countries (excl. TG winners): 78 (15\*)**

\*actual numbers due to aviation crisis, as compared to those registered.

The Geneva Health Forum has always attached great importance to supporting partial or full travel grants to participants from low and lower-middle income countries. The 2010 edition aimed at increasing this support to enable a larger number of participants to bring their experiences to international attention.

While extensive efforts had been made to provide the travel grants, the aviation crisis rendered the physical presence of many grantees impossible. However, an additional room (2 in total) was

equipped to enable more speakers to present their papers with merely a webcam on a portable computer – even from hotel rooms where they were stranded. Other travel grantees spent up to four excruciating days travelling by plane, with long waiting periods in between flights, and ending with long taxi rides to arrive at the conference venue. The organizing committee followed minute by minute the itineraries of many grantees, adapting sessions when possible to accommodate their arrival.

## THE MARKETPLACE

At the heart of the GHF, the Marketplace is the central aspect of the GHF networking experience. This exhibition area is comprised of booths and stands representing a broad range of organizations involved in global access to health – from international organizations and donor foundations to grassroots associations and research initiatives. The Marketplace area is located at the exit of the main conference rooms and just at the conference entry point, which allows for a continuous flux of participants who can informally meet and exchange with these global health actors. The 2010 edition hosted 57 Marketplace participants, which were organized according to the following thematic groupings:



- |   |                                   |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| - Global Health Initiatives and Partnerships        | - E-Health and Health Information | - Hospital and Academic Institutions         |
| - Civil Society, NGOs & Community-Based Initiatives | - Health Professionals            | - Humanitarian and International Cooperation |
|   | - Health Research                 |  |

A list of GHF 2010 Marketplace participating organizations can be found on the GHF 2010 website: <http://www.ghf10.org/reports/167>

## PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

At the outset of the GHF 2010 edition, previous participants and other colleagues were invited to contribute to formulating the themes to be dealt with at the 2010 conference. This was a first for the GHF, and was highly decisive in decisions taken on the themes.

After the Forum, participants were given the opportunity to offer feedback on the conference, its venue, content, materials, organization, in addition to more specific aspects of the sessions such as applicability to participants' respective professions, innovativeness of content, and whether a clear global picture was provided for the topics. The average scores for each of the categories indicated that over 90% of all participants rated the forum from good to excellent on each of the categories. Constructive open feedback was also offered to enable the GHF to improve on future editions.

## GHF IN THE MEDIA

### Global Health TV

Global Health TV provided daily coverage of the Geneva Health Forum. Interviews were conducted on site with many participants, highlighting some of the major conference themes. In the weeks following the Forum, the weekly Global Health TV newsletter also featured the main interviews in direct mailing to its over 30 000 recipients. This partnership allows the Geneva Health Forum to be highlighted around the world both during and after the event itself.



**Media21**



While the aviation crisis hindered the planned Media21 workshop, to be held on site at the GHF 2010 conference venue, some of the journalists who were able to attend participated instead in the official Geneva Health Forum programme. The Media21–GHF partnership is a vital means of keeping a group of journalists from low-income countries attentive to access to health issues and of facilitating their awareness of and reporting on such issues in their home countries.

**Reporting on the GHF**

Several articles were published in the local press to announce the conference while taking the opportunity to link the conference with some of the major health concerns of the moment. The Haiti earthquake is one example of this.



The aviation crisis brought the Geneva Health Forum 2010 a rather unexpected media take on the Forum, mainly commending the GHF for going through with the event despite adversity (see online articles of *La Tribune de Genève*, 19/4/2010, and *Le Temps*, 20/4/2010). Some of the participants who finally made it to the Forum after an endless 3-day trip were interviewed by the Swiss Channel TSR1 upon their arrival. The video can be accessed [on the web](#).



International press also got hold of anecdotal stories about participants' unsuccessful endeavours to arrive at the Forum, such as Gerry Elsdon, global advocate for the fight against TB and expected guest speaker for the GHF Opening Ceremony (see link to article above).

## SPONSORS AND PARTNERS



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ICVolunteers  
Institute of Development Studies (IDS)  
Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp (ITM)  
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)  
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Swiss International Airlines  
Ville de Genève

**A LOOK AHEAD...**

**THE NEXT GENEVA HEALTH FORUM IS SCHEDULED FOR**

**18-20 April 2012**

**MORE INFORMATION AND DETAILS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THE GENEVA HEALTH FORUM WEBSITE:**

**[www.genevahealthforum.org](http://www.genevahealthforum.org)**

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For information on the 2010 conference  
[www.ghf10.org](http://www.ghf10.org)

For information on the GHF in general  
[www.genevahealthforum.org](http://www.genevahealthforum.org)

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