◎ **GHV**

Partnering Better

Ten Principles for Impactful Global Health Partnerships

How pharma and other private sector health
companies can build innovative, inclusive,
and impactful global health partnerships

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

In the face of diminishing global health financing and increasingly complex health challenges, pharmaceutical companies (pharma) have a pivotal role in fostering impactful partnerships to enhance global health outcomes. By collaborating with NGOs, governments, academia, philanthropies, and other private sector entities, these companies can leverage collective expertise and resources to address pressing health issues. This summary provides an overview of the principles, while the body of the paper delves into each in detail with select industry examples.

This insights paper outlines ten principles designed to guide pharmaceutical companies in establishing highly impactful, inclusive, and innovative partnerships:

Define Global Health Goals and Priorities

To create impactful partnerships, private sector companies must clearly define their global health goals, including specific health outcomes, geographies, and disease areas they aim to address. A well-documented mission, strategy, and theory of change ensure transparency, alignment, and consistency in partner selection while proactively guiding opportunities for collaboration and preventing misaligned expectations.

Develop a Clear Partnerships Strategy

A well-defined partnerships strategy is essential for aligning objectives, identifying suitable collaborators, and maximizing global health impact. Companies should assess their internal capacity for engagement and then articulate overarching goals, specific partnership objectives, and clear guidelines for ways of working. This approach ensures that each new partnership in a disease area ladders up to the overall partnerships strategy and ensures alignment with both organizational and partner capabilities.

Ground Partnerships in Local Knowledge and Priorities

Grounding partnerships in local knowledge and priorities ensures that initiatives are culturally relevant, aligned with community needs, and responsive to national health strategies. By leveraging the insights and expertise of local stakeholders – such as their understanding of health systems, population behaviors, and barriers faced by marginalized groups – companies can avoid repeating past missteps, enhance existing solutions, and build sustainable programs that reflect the realities on the ground.

Consider Adopting a Portfolio Approach to Partnering

A portfolio approach to partnering allows companies to pursue a range of innovative partnership models, such as one-time grants, strategic multi-year collaborations, and flagship programs. Collaborating with a mix of partners – global NGOs, academic institutions, country governments, and local organizations – ensures alignment with national priorities, integration into health systems, and culturally relevant solutions. Intentionally creating a portfolio of partners with different capabilities across different levels of the health system, geographies, and expertise allows companies to amplify their impact and drive more sustainable and meaningful programs.

Leverage Unique Company Capabilities

Effective partnerships align with a company's core strengths, such as expertise in vaccines, diagnostics, or digital health. While companies should focus on leveraging their core capabilities in global health partnerships, they should also remain flexible and responsive to evolving health priorities, adapting strategies to address emerging needs and maximize long-term impact. When possible, companies should take the opportunity to pilot innovation in their partnerships, such as adopting new tools, technologies, ways of working, or mechanisms to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of global health interventions.

Think Holistically and Collaboratively

While focusing on their core strengths, pharma companies should also adopt a systems-thinking approach to ensure their interventions align with and strengthen broader health systems, addressing interdependencies like workforce capacity, supply chains, and infrastructure. Collaboration across sectors is essential to avoid siloed efforts and present cohesive solutions to governments, increasing the likelihood of adoption and long-term success.

Engage All Levels Across the Company

Engaging employees and business units in global health partnerships leverages their expertise in areas like research, supply chain, and technology to drive impactful solutions while deepening their understanding of global health challenges. Programs like secondments enable employees to provide hands-on support to partners while gaining insights into local health systems, fostering mutual learning. These efforts also enhance employee engagement, retention, and advocacy, fostering long-term support for global health work.

Pilot Innovation When Appropriate

Pharma companies have a unique opportunity to embed innovation into their global health partnerships and work collaboratively with partners to pilot new approaches, models, and delivery mechanisms for greater health impact. By thinking beyond traditional grant funding, companies can unlock more innovative, sustainable, or scalable solutions in areas such as new financing approaches, digital health tools, R&D ecosystem strengthening, and service delivery models.

Clarify Goals around Scalability and Sustainability

Pharmaceutical companies must define clear goals for scalability and sustainability at the start of a partnership, specifying whether the initiative is a scalable pilot or a targeted intervention and how it leverages partner strengths. Thoughtful scaling should balance resource availability, infrastructure, and community needs, while sustainability efforts should embed long-term impact through alignment with national priorities and local needs.

Integrate Inclusion and Localization Principles

Embedding these principles includes building trust through transparent decision-making, investing in local organizations' capacity, and ensuring local voices drive strategy and implementation. By prioritizing local ownership and sustainability, companies can shift power dynamics and create lasting, community-centered change.

Introduction

Audience

The intended audience for this paper is pharmaceutical companies and their associated foundations, as well as any private sector company seeking to make an impact in global health through partnerships. Private sector companies who already have global health programs and departments may find this paper helpful in thinking about how to strengthen, streamline, or revamp their existing portfolio of partnerships, while other companies may find this paper helpful as they consider how to build new partnerships to maximize global health impact.

Introduction

The role of pharmaceutical companies and private sector health companies in advancing global health is more critical than ever, as the world faces increasingly complex, interconnected health challenges that require innovative and collaborative solutions. Pharma companies have an unparalleled opportunity to drive meaningful progress in global health through partnerships with NGOs, governments, academia, philanthropies, and other private sector entities. These collaborations are uniquely positioned to harness the collective expertise, resources, and innovation of diverse organizations to address some of the most pressing health challenges worldwide. By working together, these partnerships can strengthen health systems (HSS), reduce disease burdens, increase access to essential health technologies, and improve health outcomes in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) and underserved communities.

Yet, while the promise of these partnerships is immense, reality often falls short. Misaligned priorities, insufficient engagement with local stakeholders, and inadequate attention to equity and sustainability can limit partnership effectiveness. In order to drive meaningful global health progress, companies must move beyond traditional transactional relationships and focus on building highly inclusive, impactful, and innovative partnerships. For private sector health companies, the key to impactful partnerships lies in a deeper

commitment to sustainability, co-creation, and willingness to leverage unique strengths from each partner to craft and implement solutions that address the intended goal. By partnering with global health organizations, local governments, and community or civil society groups, private sector companies can gain a nuanced understanding of population health needs, co-design contextually relevant interventions, and engender positive health outcomes at a local and community level. Beyond improving health outcomes, such partnerships can also drive demand for health products and services, build public trust, and foster sustainable systems change.

Creating partnerships that truly advance global health requires a strategic approach that integrates clear objectives, local knowledge, shared expertise, and mutual trust. This insights paper explores ten key principles that can guide pharmaceutical companies in building partnerships that deeply align their resources and capabilities with the needs of the communities they aim to serve. Companies will also gain an understanding of how to actionably utilize practices such as human-centered design and co-creation to optimize their global health partnerships. By embedding these principles into their partnership approaches, pharma companies can move beyond transactional collaborations and towards transformative, inclusive, and innovative partnerships that create lasting global health impact.

The Principles

Strategically selecting the right partners is critical to advancing global health goals. While each partnership is unique, there are universal principles and steps that can guide private sector companies in making informed and effective decisions. These ten principles can guide companies in structuring and executing partnerships that are mutually beneficial, sustainable, and highly impactful.

1. Define Global Health Goals and Priorities

Before engaging potential partners, private sector companies must clearly articulate their global health objectives. This includes identifying the specific health outcomes they aim to improve, such as reducing disease burden, increasing access to care, or strengthening health systems. Companies should also define their priority geographies, sectors, levels of the health system (e.g., community, district, or national), and disease areas. This clarity will enable targeted and strategic conversations with potential partners and ensure alignment with organizational goals.

Many pharma companies have an internal charter, strategy, or framework that guides their global health work and partner selection, helping them be consistent with their principles, approach, and investment criteria. Using these strategies and frameworks to guide partner selection provides transparency to other partners about why the company is invested in the work and helps contribute to the company's longer-term engagement. Being up front about the rationale for investing in this work helps to prevent other partners from questioning the private sector's motives and sets a standard for open communication. Ideally, specific global health goals and priorities would ladder up to the company's overall mission and vision, as well as reflect their perspective on health equity or social impact.

To guide partner selection and ensure alignment, companies should clearly outline their mission, approach, and theory of change for the specific issues they are looking to tackle in global health or health equity. This insights paper serves as a north star for evaluating potential partnerships and navigating opportunities proactively, related to the issue at hand.

A well-articulated theory of change clarifies the following:

- > The company's overarching vision for global health impact

- > The pathways through which partnerships can contribute to achieving this vision

- > The measurable outcomes the company aims to achieve

Companies should also be prepared for inbound opportunities. Because many non-profits, governments, local organizations, or bilateral/multilateral organizations do approach pharma and other private sector health companies to discuss partnerships, it is even more important for companies to have a clearly defined and documented approach, mission, and theory of change around global health and health equity that can guide their interactions and decision-making as organizations seek to engage with them. While many companies do have processes in place for navigating inbound opportunities, some criteria for evaluating unsolicited proposals may include:

- > Alignment with the company's global health priorities, theory of change, and specific issue area

- > The partner's track record, capacity, and ability to deliver on shared objectives

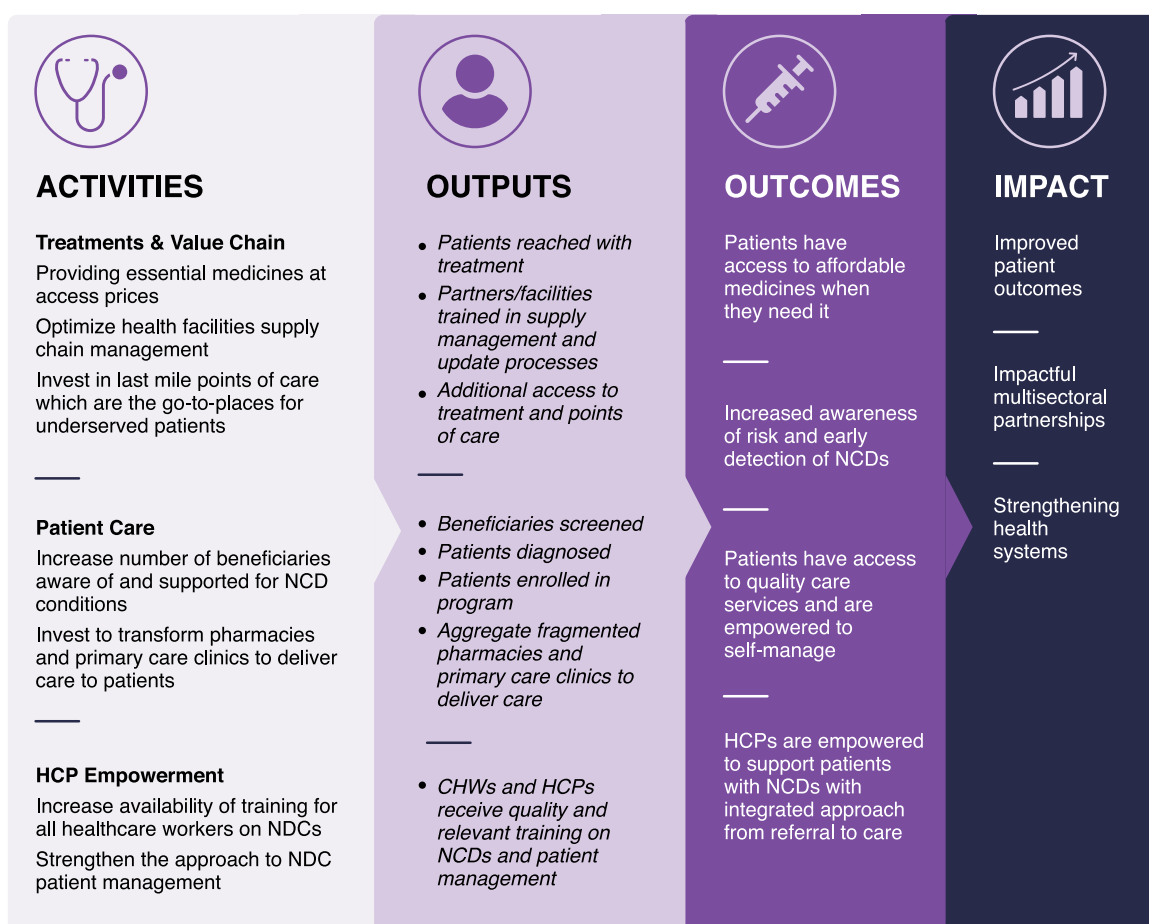- > Opportunities for mutual benefit and long-term sustainability

By proactively defining their priorities and creating a structured decision-making framework, private sector companies can better identify partnerships that have the greatest potential for impact and avoid spreading themselves too thinly.

Company Spotlight

Sanofi **Sanofi's Global Health Unit's Theory of Change**

Sanofi's Global Health Unit (GHU), a not-for-profit business model, clearly defines its global health goals and strategic priorities to improve healthcare in the communities in which they operate. Their three strategic areas are Access to Medicines, Health Systems Strengthening, and Impact Fund Investing. Sanofi's GHU publishes a clear Theory of Change that explains how Sanofi aims to achieve its intended impact by mapping its strategic priorities to activities, outputs, expected outcomes, and impact. 1

ACTIVITIES

Treatments & Value Chain

Providing essential medicines at access prices

Optimize health facilities supply chain management

Invest in last mile points of care which are the go-to-places for underserved patients

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Patient Care

Increase number of beneficiaries aware of and supported for NCD conditions

Invest to transform pharmacies and primary care clinics to deliver care to patients

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HCP Empowerment

Increase availability of training for all healthcare workers on NDCs

Strengthen the approach to NDC patient management

OUTPUTS

- *Patients reached with treatment*
- *Partners/facilities trained in supply management and update processes*
- *Additional access to treatment and points of care*

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- *Beneficiaries screened*
- *Patients diagnosed*
- *Patients enrolled in program*
- *Aggregate fragmented pharmacies and primary care clinics to deliver care*

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- *CHWs and HCPs receive quality and relevant training on NCDs and patient management*

OUTCOMES

Patients have access to affordable medicines when they need it

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Increased awareness of risk and early detection of NCDs

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Patients have access to quality care services and are empowered to self-manage

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HCPs are empowered to support patients with NCDs with integrated approach from referral to care

IMPACT

Improved patient outcomes

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Impactful multisectoral partnerships

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Strengthening health systems

🤝 2. Develop a Clear Partnerships Strategy

To achieve meaningful global health impact, companies must establish a well-defined and strategic approach to partnerships. This begins with outlining overarching partnership goals and clarifying the specific objectives for the collaboration at hand. A documented strategy should include clear guidelines, models, and principles for how the company intends to work with partners. Developing clarity around the intended goal of the partnership and guidelines, ways of working, models, or specific approaches the company wants to take will help crystallize which partnerships might be right for the company and the partner. By defining these elements upfront, companies can better identify and attract partners whose values, expertise, and capabilities align with their mission.

In order to develop a clear partnerships strategy, companies must clearly assess their capacity and bandwidth for engagement. Understanding internal capacity is essential for ensuring partnerships are feasible and sustainable, and crucial to evaluating what kind of partnership the company is able to take on. Having a clear picture of these factors will help avoid overcommitment and enable companies to approach partnerships with transparency and realistic expectations. Companies should evaluate the following:

> **Budget:** How much funding is available for the partnership and how is the funding anticipated being spread across different partners, populations, or locations?

> **Local Presence:** Does the company have offices, local networks, or operational capacity in the target region or country?

> **Team Bandwidth:** Are there dedicated team members to invest in, manage, and support the partnership? How much bandwidth is available for strategic co-creation with the partner and ongoing support?

> **Leadership Support:** Is there alignment and backing from leadership and other business units?

> **Timeframe:** Over what period does the company anticipate having the capacity to support this partnership?

> **Outcomes:** What types of outputs, outcomes, and impact is the company seeking to have? Getting as clear as possible about desired outcomes can help guide the partnership smoothly from the beginning.

The development of a partnerships strategy may include sub-strategies or approaches for different health or topical areas. For instance, if a company aims to strengthen health systems for delivering cancer screening and prevention programs in LMICs, it should specify the levels of the health system or infrastructure it seeks to influence, such as community health worker training, diagnostic equipment distribution, financing, or policy and advocacy. If the approach involves a philanthropic grant program, companies should articulate detailed criteria, such as the types of expertise they are seeking, the support they will provide to grantees, and the desired outcomes. For example, grant application guidelines could specify that the company is looking for partners with experience in public health and education campaigns in a specific country or deploying innovative diagnostic solutions for early detection. This clarity ensures that grant applications are aligned with the company's goals and expectations, streamlining the selection process.

In addition to structured approaches, companies should consider incorporating collaborative methodologies such as co-creation or co-design into their partnership strategies. These approaches enable companies to work closely with partners, stakeholders, and end-users to generate innovative solutions tailored to complex global health challenges. For example, a co-creation workshop with local NGOs and community leaders might uncover culturally relevant ways to increase cancer screening rates in underserved populations. By embedding collaborative techniques, companies can foster partnerships that are not only innovative but also sustainable and deeply rooted in local contexts. More information on co-creation can be found in the **Appendix.**

3. Ground Partnerships in Local Knowledge and Priorities

For partnerships to create meaningful and sustainable global health impact, they must be firmly centered in local knowledge and responsive to the health needs identified by communities. This localized approach ensures that initiatives are relevant, effective, and aligned with country priorities, maximizing their potential for success. Pharmaceutical and private sector health companies can significantly enhance their impact by partnering with organizations that possess deep local expertise and networks.

Local partners bring invaluable insights into the following:

> **Health Needs:** A nuanced understanding of the most pressing health challenges in specific geographies with consideration of barriers facing specific populations, particularly vulnerable or marginalized populations.

> **Population Preferences:** Awareness of cultural norms, customs, preferences, and behaviors that influence health-seeking behavior, health education, and health communication.

- **Health Systems:** Familiarity with local health infrastructure, service delivery models, health workforce, governance and financing, and health information systems and technology, particular how the health system works at different levels for particular diseases, products, and services.

- **Local Structures:** Strong relationships with community leaders, government stakeholders, civil society organizations, and religious, tribal, and indigenous leaders.

By collaborating with local partners, companies can better understand how and where they can contribute most effectively. Local stakeholders also bring historical context, helping to avoid repeating past missteps and ensuring that proposed solutions are feasible and relevant. Partnerships that align with national health priorities and locally identified needs are inherently stronger and more sustainable. Local communities often already possess the knowledge and strategies to address their health challenges. Partnerships should focus on enhancing

these solutions by providing the resources, technology, and strategic support needed to scale them effectively. Local communities and governments often already have strategies and frameworks in place to address their health challenges. Rather than reinventing the wheel, private sector companies can focus on amplifying these efforts by bringing resources, connections, and strategic insights to help countries achieve their own priorities.

By grounding partnerships in local knowledge and aligning them with community needs and national priorities, private sector companies can create more impactful collaborations that drive meaningful and lasting improvements in global health.

Human-centered design (HCD) can play a crucial role in this process. By incorporating the voices of end-users and key stakeholders during the planning and design phases, companies can ensure that interventions meet the real needs of the communities they aim to serve. This approach fosters trust, builds buy-in, and improves the likelihood of long-term success. For more information on human-centered design, see the **Appendix.**

Company Spotlight

Lilly: A locally led approach to diabetes prevention

The Diabetes Impact Project (DIP-IN), a multi-sector global health partnership, places community voices at the center of decision-making to address diabetes prevention and management. Launched in 2018 to combat stark health inequities – where life expectancy in some Indianapolis neighborhoods is up to 17 years lower than in communities just 20 miles away – DIP-IN ensures that residents themselves determine the most effective interventions for their communities. A key pillar of DIP-IN is its partnership with Eskenazi Health, a central Indiana healthcare system, to deploy community health workers (CHWs) who provide social services, connect residents to primary care, and offer diabetes education. These CHWs – either residents themselves or individuals with deep ties to the community – build trust-based relationships, making health interventions more effective and culturally relevant. Additionally, CHWs are placed in local community organizations such as Christamore House, Flanner House, and the United Northeast Community Development Corporation

to expand diabetes prevention, awareness, and screening efforts. DIP-IN's resident-led steering committees play a pivotal role in shaping the program. These committees use survey data, project information, key informant interviews, and other local perspectives to identify barriers to diabetes prevention and care, prioritize needs, and approve funding for tailored, evidence-based solutions, such as community gardens, local fitness programs, cooking classes, stress reduction initiatives, and social connection activities. DIP-IN also works with other local partners such as the Marion County Public Health Department, the Fairbanks School of Public Health at Indiana University, and the Polis Center at Indiana University. The expansion of DIP-IN in 2021 extended it to 8 years with the added aim of increasing civic engagement and community capacity to lead DIP-IN initiatives, enhancing sustainability and highlighting the power of community-led health programming. [2]

4. Consider Adopting a Portfolio Approach to Partnering

Addressing complex global health challenges requires a diverse range of expertise and resources. There are many forms partnerships can take depending on level of investment, ownership, timing, and approach. Most pharma companies choose to take a portfolio approach to partnerships, engaging a variety of partners and partnership models to achieve their objectives. This approach allows companies to tackle challenges at multiple levels, leveraging the unique strengths of different organizations and balancing different levels of input, bandwidth, and resources required from the company.

Pharmaceutical companies with strong global health impact often develop multiple partnership models that cover different geographies, disease areas, levels of the health system, or specific elements of a health system. Most companies' global health partnerships fall into the following broad archetypes:

> **Direct funding to organizations:** Often one-time, smaller-scale donations in support of a standalone or targeted effort.

> **Contributions to UN agencies, global health institutions, multi-actor partnerships and coalitions:** Partnerships with global organizations or platforms to contribute a company's voice, expertise, or resources to a global agenda, coalition, advocacy platform, or cause.

> **Partnership-focused initiatives:** Close collaboration with an NGO that leverages both stakeholders' expertise to drive change, which can be used as a conduit for supporting local organizations.

> **Company-operated flagship programs:** Self-funded initiatives that competitors own and operate, which are often long-term in nature (five+ years) and typically address systemic unmet needs.

Levels of necessary human and financial resources tend to increase along the spectrum of models, with direct funding to organizations at the low end of resource investment to company-operated flagship programs, which require much more investment and resources over a typically longer timeframe. Company portfolios typically include a mix across these partnership models, which serve different purposes

for the company and result in different levels of impact and reach. For example, a company may invest 60% of its efforts into one or two ongoing flagship programs that become their signature initiatives in global health and then split the rest of its resources across three or four strategic partnerships that are co-created for impact over a five-year timeframe, participation in one or two global coalitions, and some recurring or one-off direct philanthropic grants. To bring it to life, a company may support one-time grants for emergency pandemic response efforts, co-create a multi-year partnership to strengthen health system infrastructure for health worker training, and operate a signature global health platform focused on a specific disease area like HIV or diabetes.

A portfolio approach can also include an intentional selection of different types of partners. For example, many companies have a few partnerships with large, well-established international NGOs, some partnerships with country governments or ministries, and some partnerships with local partners in the county, region, or country they are operating in. An intentional selection of partner types can provide companies with the local knowledge, operational expertise, and credibility needed to achieve their global health goals. Below are examples of partner types and some potential roles:

> **Local Partners:** Local organizations such as community-based NGOs, grassroots groups, civil society organizations, patient advocacy organizations, or local academic institutions or private sector companies are vital for understanding community-specific needs, designing contextually relevant programs, ensuring last-mile delivery of health products and services, and contributing to effective implementation. These partners often excel at engaging with local governments, community leaders and end-users to deliver programs, identifying storytellers, and amplifying or visualizing impact.

> **Country Governments or Regional Coordinating Bodies:** Collaborating with ministries of health or regional health organizations is essential for aligning with national health priorities and policies. These partnerships ensure that programs are integrated into national health systems, align with country health infrastructure, reflect the needs and voices of local populations, and have the necessary government support to succeed.

> **Academic and Research Institutions:** Universities and research organizations bring cutting-edge expertise in data analysis, health systems research, clinical trials, and program evaluation. They can help design evidence-based interventions, assess program effectiveness, and generate insights to inform global health strategies, often providing access to the latest research and innovative methodologies.

> **International NGOs:** Large, well-established international NGOs bring operational expertise, scale, and global credibility. They often implement similar programs across different geographies, conduct health research in a particular area, or lead advocacy efforts. These partnerships can be helpful in scaling a successful pilot program to other countries or regions or coordinating a multi-country program.

> **Multilateral or Bilateral Partners:** These organizations are often instrumental in addressing high-level global health issues such as shaping regulatory environments, establishing supply chains, coordinating financing mechanisms, and developing national guidelines.

Key considerations for selecting partners for a particular type of partnership may include the following:

> Areas of expertise, including specific capabilities to implement a particular project

> Geographic footprint and local knowledge of the area

> Relationships with local government, faith-based leaders, and a history of working in collaboration with the country and its existing processes and systems (e.g., not creating parallel supply chains)

> Ability to navigate and operationalize their work in collaboration with Ministries of Health

> Openness to dialogue, partnership cultivation, and co-creation of a program

> Strong reputation, governance, and compliance, assessed through the company's due diligence process

> Ability to measure and deliver on stated outputs or outcomes

> Opportunity to support partners that find it difficult to receive mainstream funding (e.g., women-led groups)

Company Spotlight

ᔐ NOVARTIS **Novartis's Sickle Cell Disease Program**

Novartis has taken a portfolio approach to partnerships specifically for tackling sickle cell disease (SCD) in Africa, working with a diverse network of local, multilateral, and global stakeholders to improve outcomes. Launched in 2019 in Ghana, its Africa SCD program provides comprehensive, end-to-end solutions, from newborn screening to treatment access and health system strengthening. To address high childhood mortality rates from SCD, Novartis collaborates with the American Society of Hematology's CONSA program to expand newborn screening and affordable diagnosis. Its Ahodwo program has trained over 100 SCD clinics in Ghana and Uganda to provide comprehensive disease management. In treatment, Novartis is expanding access to a proven generic medicine while launching a child-friendly formulation in Ghana, with plans to scale across Africa. Novartis also supports digital health innovations, including an app developed with the Sickle Cell Foundation of Ghana that has registered over 90,000 babies for newborn screening. In research, the company partners with SickKids, the Navrongo Health Research Center, and Hemex Health to integrate point-of-care testing into primary care centers in Ghana's Upper East Region, screening 6,000 babies in the first year alone. Additionally, a telehealth partnership with Vula Mobile connects health workers to specialists remotely, helping overcome transportation barriers. Novartis is also pioneering next-generation treatments in partnership with the Gates Foundation, aiming to develop a single-administration in vivo gene therapy for SCD. It has also partnered with Precision BioSciences to explore gene-editing technology that could counteract the sickle cell mutation. Furthermore, Novartis also helped establish the World Coalition on Sickle Cell Disease alongside African health leaders, WHO Africa Regional Office, World Bank, Global Sickle Cell Disease Network, Pfizer, Novo Nordisk, the American Society of Hematology, and others. The coalition seeks to drive renewed commitments to SCD care, advance policy change, elevate SCD in the global narrative, and enhance global coordination of programmatic efforts and investments. By leveraging different partnerships across technological innovation, global advocacy, and local implementation, Novartis exemplifies how a strategic portfolio of partnerships can transform disease outcomes. 3

⭐ 5. Leverage Unique Company Capabilities

For partnerships to be effective, feasible, and sustainable, they must align with a company's core capabilities, strategic priorities, and long-term vision. By leveraging areas where the company already excels, partnerships can maximize impact while ensuring feasibility and scalability.

Focus on Core Strengths: Companies should concentrate on areas where they have unique expertise, products, or infrastructure to offer. For instance, a pharmaceutical company specializing in vaccines could focus on strengthening cold chain logistics or vaccine delivery systems to prepare country infrastructure for mRNA vaccine introduction. Similarly, companies with robust digital capabilities might prioritize developing health data systems, digital health national architecture, or telehealth solutions in low-resource settings. Diagnostics companies can consider ways to improve laboratory capacity optimization and lab technician training or focus on strengthening sample transportation systems at the community level in priority geographies. By staying roughly within their domains of expertise, companies can deliver high-value contributions without overstretching their resources or entering unfamiliar territory. It is also crucial for companies to articulate their core value proposition and how their global health and social impact work can be differentiated compared to other companies. Consider what your company can uniquely bring to the table and how it can stand out.

Remain Flexible and Responsive: Health systems and priorities in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) are dynamic, often influenced by emerging health crises, shifting donor priorities, or political changes. Partnerships should be aligned to company core capabilities, their partnerships strategy, and their overall health equity or social impact framework, but also remain flexible enough to pivot in response to evolving needs. For example, a company may initially focus on vaccine delivery systems but pivot to broader health systems strengthening if gaps in primary care delivery emerge as a barrier to vaccination efforts. Regular communication with partners and ongoing monitoring of the health landscape can help identify when adjustments are needed. Additionally, setbacks can often come up (e.g., COVID-19 or changes in country leadership and priorities), often requiring companies to commit through periods of ups and downs to really see benefits and impact from the partnership.

Company Spotlight 💡

⬡ Roche   Roche's Global Fund Partnership to Strengthen Diagnostics Infrastructure

Roche is an excellent example of leveraging its company capabilities and core strengths to enhance diagnostics infrastructure and systems around the world. Through Roche's signature Global Access Program, it has partnered with the Global Fund, Ministries of Health, and local partners to holistically improve diagnostics infrastructure and health systems capacity to collect, generate, and deliver healthcare test results for people with HIV and TB in LMICs. Through this partnership, Roche aims to comprehensively build local capacity to tackle fundamental infrastructure challenges and healthcare waste management, including strengthening effective processes to collect, transport, and test samples, as well as return the results to patients for timely clinical interventions.

Roche also seeks to address health system challenges arising from a lack of network infrastructure, workforce capacity, access to roads, and IT systems. The partnership will also include novel approaches to reduce the environmental and economic burden of healthcare waste generated during the testing process itself and the disposal of instruments and medical devices at the end of its/their useful life. Furthermore, Roche launched a Scientific Campus in South Africa and formalized its partnership with the Kenya Medical Research Institute to commit to skills and capacity building for laboratory technicians. By leveraging its internal capabilities and vast diagnostics expertise, Roche can effectively enhance laboratory networks in LMICs. [4]

⟳ 6. Think Holistically and Collaboratively

> **Adopt a Systems Thinking Approach:** While focus is critical, it should be complemented by a systems thinking lens that considers how the company's efforts fit into the broader health ecosystem. This approach involves assessing how targeted interventions, such as vaccine delivery improvements, integrate with national health systems, existing supply chains, and current workforce capacity. Understanding interdependencies within the system ensures that solutions are sustainable and do not inadvertently create gaps, duplicative efforts, or inefficiencies elsewhere. For example, addressing cold chain logistics should also consider electricity reliability, maintenance of equipment, and training for health workers managing vaccine storage.

> **Foster Collaboration to Avoid Silos:** Global health challenges are multifaceted, requiring coordinated efforts across sectors. Partnerships that align with a company's strengths can be further enhanced by collaborating with other organizations, funders, or private sector entities working on complementary areas. Consider how it can be overwhelming or frustrating for a country government or ministry of health to receive many different partnership proposals from different partners and sectors to address different challenges in their health system. Pharma companies should think about how to develop integrated and unified proposals that address an area of the health system across diseases by collaborating with partners at different levels with different skillsets to bring cohesive proposals to countries. For instance, consider a pharmaceutical company aiming to improve vaccine access in LMICs. It could leverage its core strengths of developing and distributing vaccines and partner with local NGOs to train healthcare workers on vaccine administration, work with logistics companies to improve last-mile cold chain storage and delivery, collaborate with governments to establish open-source data systems to track immunization rates, and partner with other organizations to advance the integration of immunization programs with maternal and child health initiatives. Presenting this type of cohesive, integrated approach to Ministries of Health can increase the likelihood of adoption and long-term success. It is important to ensure these partnerships are created on a voluntary basis and that trusting relationships are built prior to collaboration to enhance execution success.
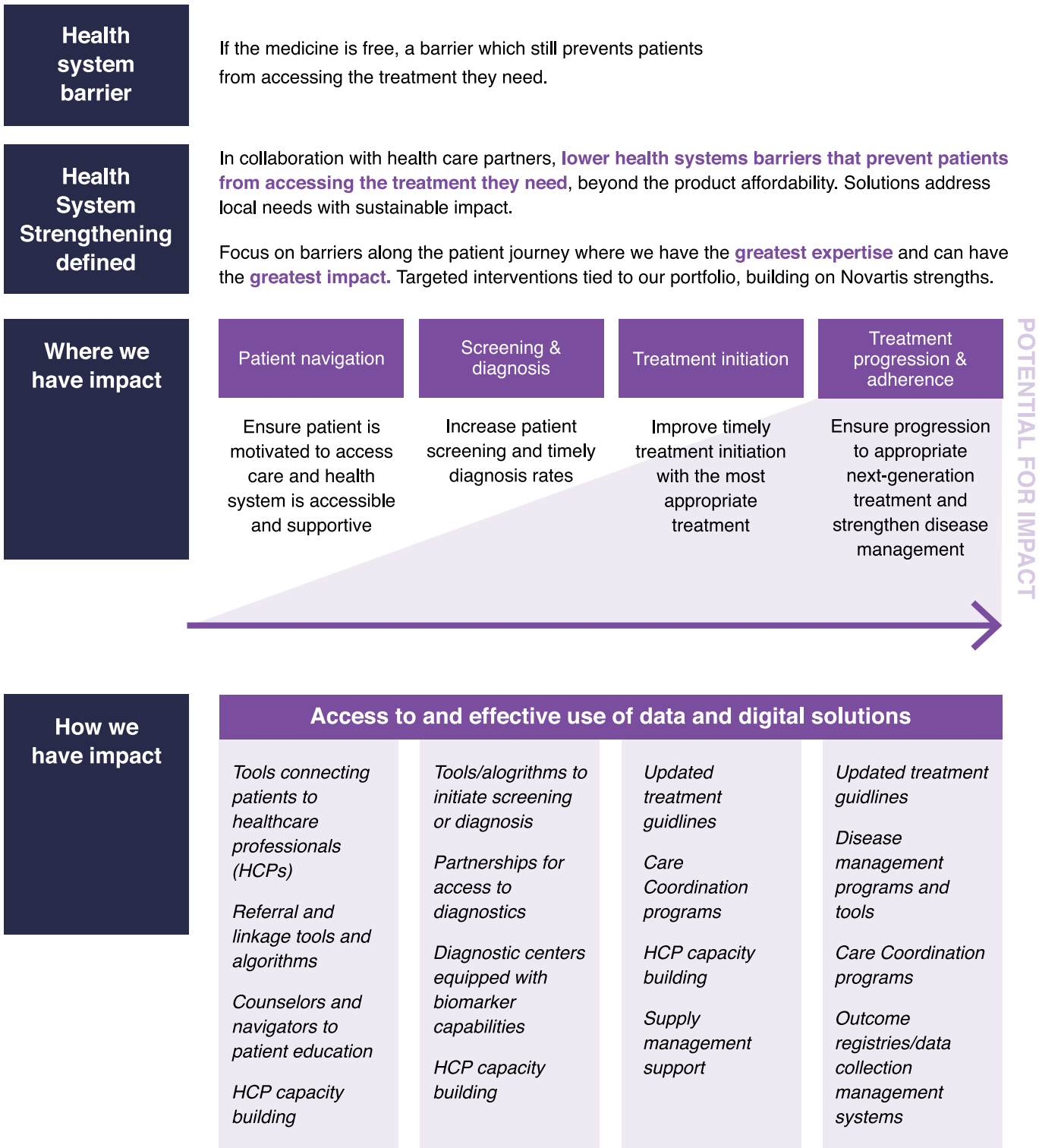

Company Spotlight 💡

⚘ NOVARTIS   **Novartis's Health Systems Strengthening Framework**

Novartis's global health efforts focus on the three pillars: research and development, medicines affordability, and strengthening healthcare systems (HSS). Within HSS, Novartis has articulated their belief in adopting a systems thinking lens to lowering barriers to healthcare delivery and uptake by addressing health infrastructure challenges. Because of this grounding and holistic systems framework, the company has a systematic, enterprise-wide approach to addressing health system barriers and integrates HSS throughout their core business planning processes.

Their signature HSS framework (see image below) enables them to identify targeted partnerships and investments to support their HSS vision, such as training healthcare workers to improve their ability to help patients, equipping patients to take ownership of their health and better manage their disease, raising awareness of diseases, promoting health-seeking behavior, and collaborating to improve local research and clinical trial capabilities. By adopting this systems-thinking lens, Novartis improves health infrastructure and systems end-to-end instead of simply tackling a siloed problem, enabling more sustainable solutions. 5

Novartis Health Systems Strengthening Framework:

Health system barrier

If the medicine is free, a barrier which still prevents patients from accessing the treatment they need.

Health System Strengthening defined

In collaboration with health care partners, **lower health systems barriers that prevent patients from accessing the treatment they need**, beyond the product affordability. Solutions address local needs with sustainable impact.

Focus on barriers along the patient journey where we have the **greatest expertise** and can have the **greatest impact.** Targeted interventions tied to our portfolio, building on Novartis strengths.

Where we have impact

Patient navigation	Screening & diagnosis	Treatment initiation	Treatment progression & adherence
Ensure patient is motivated to access care and health system is accessible and supportive	Increase patient screening and timely diagnosis rates	Improve timely treatment initiation with the most appropriate treatment	Ensure progression to appropriate next-generation treatment and strengthen disease management

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT

How we have impact

Access to and effective use of data and digital solutions

Tools connecting patients to healthcare professionals (HCPs) Referral and linkage tools and algorithms Counselors and navigators to patient education HCP capacity building	Tools/alogrithms to initiate screening or diagnosis Partnerships for access to diagnostics Diagnostic centers equipped with biomarker capabilities HCP capacity building	Updated treatment guidlines Care Coordination programs HCP capacity building Supply management support	Updated treatment guidlines Disease management programs and tools Care Coordination programs Outcome registries/data collection management systems

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👥 7. Engage All Levels Across the Company

Pharmaceutical companies' greatest asset in global health partnerships often lies within their own workforce – teams brimming with knowledge, expertise, and skills in areas such as research, technology, supply chain, finance, and management. Leveraging this talent pool through innovative partnership models can drive meaningful progress for global health organizations while simultaneously enriching the company's own understanding and commitment to its global health priorities.

> **Foster Direct Knowledge Exchange:** Companies can design partnerships that enable the meaningful exchange of expertise between their employees and global health organizations. For example, implementing secondment programs, where employees are temporarily placed within field offices of NGOs, ministries of health, or local organizations, can allow them to provide hands-on support in critical areas like supply chain optimization, financial management, or digital health solutions. This direct engagement not only strengthens partner organizations' operational capacity but also helps employees develop a first-hand understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities within local health systems. These partnerships should be designed as two-way learning opportunities. Employees bring their technical and professional expertise to solve pressing issues, while gaining valuable insights into the cultural, systemic, and practical realities of delivering healthcare in resource-constrained settings. This cross-pollination of knowledge enriches both parties, fostering innovation and more sustainable solutions. It is important to note that hosting an international employee can take significant time and effort, which should be accounted for as the partnership is being developed.

> **Institutionalize Cross-Business Unit Involvement:** Beyond individual placements, companies should consider how entire business units can contribute to global health partnerships. For example, supply chain teams can work with partners to streamline logistics for last-mile delivery, while technology teams can co-develop digital tools to enhance data collection and health system monitoring.

Marketing teams can support health campaigns and publish individual impact stories, and research and development (R&D) units can align efforts with country government needs for prioritizing R&D efforts in developing affordable, accessible medicines in the areas that are critical to countries. Novartis is an excellent example of this approach, as they now integrate health system strengthening (HSS) throughout their core business planning processes. They track a corporate KPI outlining that all Novartis global product launches should have an HSS strategy for local adaptation. Integrating a global health lens within all business units and product launches in this way can be a deeply powerful and sustainable way to advance global health impact. 6

> **Leverage Leadership Voice:** The role of senior leadership in championing global health partnerships is critical to their success. When executives actively articulate the importance of global health and social impact initiatives, these priorities gain visibility, credibility, and the necessary resource allocation within the company. Leadership advocacy ensures that health equity-driven programs are not siloed but instead integrated into broader business strategies, fostering long-term commitment and sustainable impact. By embedding global health priorities into corporate narratives, decision-making, and performance metrics, senior leaders can drive a culture where meaningful partnerships are not just philanthropic add-ons but core to the company's mission and value creation.

Engaging employees and teams in global health initiatives creates an emotional connection to the company's mission, increasing their buy-in and enthusiasm for global health work. These experiences often ignite a sense of purpose and pride, leading to stronger employee engagement, retention, and advocacy within the organization. Furthermore, exposure to the complexities of global health can help employees at all levels – from junior staff to senior executives – better align their day-to-day work with the company's broader global health goals. These types of partnerships can ideally lead to more long-term support and resources dedicated to global health impact.

Company Spotlight

GSK's Partnership with Save the Children

Since 2013, GSK and Save the Children have built a collaborative partnership that goes beyond traditional corporate-NGO models, fostering direct knowledge exchange to reduce child mortality. By combining GSK's scientific expertise with Save the Children's frontline reach, they have developed innovative solutions to improve access to life-saving interventions. Their partnership spans universal health coverage, health systems strengthening, global thought leadership, and research innovation. The partnership has several pillars of engagement, one of which is a direct knowledge exchange. GSK shares its expertise in supply chain, procurement, and management systems with Save the Children for greater efficiency, delivering over $500K of cost savings per year. GSK helps build Save the Children's skills through trainings in negotiations, benchmarking, and insights, improving quality through supplier audit and policy and handbook development, and building the capacity of Save's

Procurement Team. Furthermore, GSK employees are encouraged to fundraise for Save the Children, with all funds matched by GSK. GSK employees volunteer to help roll out a suite of management tools for Save the Children and often work in three-to-six-month placements at global Save locations as part of GSK's PULSE program. So far, over 100 GSK employees have completed placements with Save, contributing to knowledge sharing and growth, driving deeper leadership buy-in, awareness of global health issues, and closer connections to patients for GSK employees. Beyond health impacts, the partnership has significantly improved GSK employee engagement – employees associated with the partnership are twice as likely to say they feel proud of working for GSK. The GSK/Save the Children Partnership has won many awards, including Best Business Charity Partnership, Best Employee Engagement Scheme, Best Corporate NGO Partnership, amongst others. 7

8. Pilot Innovation When Appropriate

Pharma companies have a unique opportunity to embed innovation into their global health partnerships and work collaboratively with partners to pilot new approaches, models, and delivery mechanisms for greater health impact. By thinking beyond traditional grant funding, companies can unlock more innovative, sustainable, or scalable solutions in areas such as new financing approaches, digital health tools, R&D ecosystem strengthening, and service delivery models.

> **Innovative Financing Models:** Traditional funding models alone are often insufficient to meet the scale of global health challenges and may fall short in driving long-term impact and sustainable, locally led ownership. Pharma companies can deploy alternative financing mechanisms to catalyze new partnerships, mobilize resources more effectively, de-risk investments, attract co-funding from nontraditional funders, and ensure financial sustainability. Here are some sample mechanisms:

- **Challenge Funds and Prize-Based Incentives:** Pharma companies can stimulate innovation by funding global health challenge funds and prizes that encourage breakthroughs in areas with high unmet needs such as neglected tropical diseases, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), pandemic preparedness and response, and rare diseases, amongst others. These competitive funding models attract diverse players – including startups, research institutions, and local innovators – that can develop new solutions. For example, the Longitude Prize on AMR catalyzed teams of innovators around the world to invent an affordable, accurate, rapid and easy-to-use diagnostic test for bacterial infections to allow health professionals to administer the right antibiotic at the right time. 8
Pharma companies can also consider co-funding open innovation hackathons or accelerator programs to drive localized solutions for health system strengthening, patient adherence, and supply chain efficiency.

- **Venture Funds and Blended Finance Models:** Corporate venture funds and blended finance models offer pharma companies another route to catalyze impact through innovation. By investing in early-stage health startups working on drugs, diagnostics, vaccines, or devices through impact funds, pharma can scale disruptive technologies and enhance local innovation ecosystems. Blended finance structures, which combine philanthropic, public, and private capital, can de-risk investments in global health areas such as essential medicine production, digital health, and decentralized healthcare delivery.

- **Market Shaping Interventions:** Working with partners to set up pooled procurement mechanisms, volume guarantees, or participate in advance market commitments (AMCs) (or AMCs with target product profiles) can be mutually beneficial for companies and patients. Assured demand through these mechanisms ensures timely, affordable access to medicines for LMICs while incentivizing pharma investment in R&D and production for global health needs despite limited or uncertain commercial markets.

- **Outcomes-based financing mechanisms:** such as development impact bonds (DIBs) and pay-for-success (PFS) models, enable pharma companies to fund health interventions while ensuring measurable results. Investors provide upfront capital for global health programs, and repayment is contingent on achieving predefined health outcomes – such as increased vaccination rates or improved adherence to HIV treatment. Shifting to performance-based payments can help drive better health outcomes, improve accountability and efficiency in health investments, and offer repayment (or even a return) to partners, de-risking their investments.

By exploring these innovative financing models when appropriate, pharma companies can move beyond traditional grant funding and catalyze new partnerships to further self-sustaining health solutions.

- **Digital Health and AI Solutions:** Pharma companies can accelerate digital health and appropriate AI adoption and interoperability by collaborating with local partners, governments, NGOs, and other private sector companies to pilot innovative technologies.

- **AI-powered diagnostics** can help healthcare workers detect TB, malaria, cervical cancer, and other diseases via smartphone imaging, as evidenced by Google's AI-assisted screening for diabetic retinopathy in India and Thailand.

- Partnerships with AI firms can unlock efficiencies in **drug discovery** and preclinical research, expand the use of AI-driven epidemiological **surveillance** for pandemic and epidemic preparedness, and leverage the potential of AI for predicting clinical trial outcomes and optimizing clinical trial design, which can significantly reduce costs and help personalize treatment approaches.

- Partnerships can also focus on expanding **telehealth platforms,** virtual care models, and remote patient monitoring for rural or low-resource communities.

- Companies can pilot innovative methods to digitize supply chains, improve adherence through digital health solutions, and leverage big data for better decision-making. For example, AI-driven supply forecasting tools and **blockchain-enabled supply chain tracking systems** can improve efficiency and transparency in drug distribution and inventory management, reducing fraud and counterfeiting. **Chatbots and AI-powered virtual health assistants** can improve treatment adherence, patient engagement, and health education for chronic diseases.

- **R&D Ecosystems and Local Manufacturing:** Companies can consider investing in partnerships that allow the testing of new innovations to enhance the global health R&D ecosystem and build local and regional manufacturing capacity for global health products. 9

- Pharma companies can drive innovation in the entire R&D ecosystem by piloting innovative clinical trial designs and networks, leveraging mobile technology and AI-driven patient recruitment to decentralize clinical trials, enhance efficient data collection, and pilot remote patient monitoring to increase inclusivity in clinical trials. 10

- Companies can invest in optimized mRNA production processes and modular production, supporting local and regional manufacturing efforts, and improving the regulatory and governance of R&D for global health.

- Companies can test AI-driven models to identify existing drug compounds during discovery that can be repurposed for new indications in LMIC or underserved markets.

- Pharma companies can consider joining collaborative alliances where multiple companies pool funding and share risks and resources to engage in late-stage R&D for new global health treatments.

- Partnering with regional or local manufacturers in LMICs to conduct technology transfers can help improve drug and vaccine production and investing in modular or mobile manufacturing units can improve the supply of flexible, small-scale manufacturing hubs that can be rapidly deployed in regions with urgent health needs.

- Companies can also leverage partnerships to explore more sustainable and environmentally friendly drug or vaccine manufacturing methods that reduce carbon footprints and pharmaceutical waste.

> **Service Delivery Models:** Companies can pilot new innovations in delivering healthcare services in order to drive equitable access, reach remote populations, strengthen health systems, and align incentives across health sectors.

- Reaching last-mile populations can be made easier with investments in innovations such as solar-powered or passive cooling cold chain storage solutions to ensure vaccine stability in areas with unreliable electricity or the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to deliver health products to remote areas, reducing stockouts and delays.

- Integrating care across disease areas and strengthening primary healthcare systems is crucial to reducing barriers to healthcare. Companies can partner with governments and NGOs to co-locate services like HIV, TB, and maternal health into one-stop integrated care clinics to streamline access points or pilot the integration of testing and treatment for HIV and NCD care at pharmacies.

- Companies can invest in community-based healthcare delivery such as incentive models (performance-based incentives, digital payments, etc.) to improve engagement and retention of frontline community health workers.

- Piloting public-private partnerships with pharmacies and retailers to expand access to bundled health products through lockers in non-traditional private sector access points such as shopping centers, transportation hubs, workplaces, etc. can enhance adherence and reduce stigma. Investing in self-service digital and retail-based health kiosks in pharmacies, malls, and workplaces can also increase access to low-cost screenings and telehealth consultations for chronic diseases, sexual and reproductive health, or mental health.

- Companies can partner with fintech firms to co-develop microinsurance or digital-lending solutions to help patients in LMICs afford out-of-pocket healthcare costs. Bundling financing with health services can help to improve adherence over the long term.

Piloting these types of innovations in global health partnerships can catalyze efficiencies and accelerate progress toward shared health goals, reimagining how pharma engages with global health actors to create more sustainable solutions for communities worldwide.

Company Spotlight

MERCK for Mothers   **Merck for Mothers' role in the World's First Health Development Impact Bond**

Merck for Mothers, Merck's global maternal health initiative, has been a pioneer in piloting innovative financing mechanisms – such as catalytic grants, development impact bonds, and grants blended with debt and equity – to close funding gaps for maternal health. These mechanisms provide an enormous opportunity to unlock additional funding across sectors and allocate resources more effectively to improve health. In particular, Merck for Mothers recently served as an outcomes funder in the world's first development impact bond (DIB) for health, the Utkrisht Development Impact Bond. A DIB is a pay-for results financing mechanism that leverages private investment to support health and development objectives. For Utkrisht, Merck for Mothers collaborated with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), UBS Optimus Foundation, and Palladium to improve the quality of maternity care for women in Rajasthan, which has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in India. The Utkrisht DIB helped private healthcare facilities enhance services, meet new government quality standards for safe delivery, and adhere to these standards over time. Analysis by an independent verifier at the end of the DIB found that Utkrisht achieved both its facility quality improvement objectives and financial objectives. 11

9. Clarify Goals around Scalability and Sustainability

At the beginning of the partnership, it is important for companies to have clarity on their objectives related to scalability and sustainability. Being clear up front about whether the partnership is meant to grow and expand over time or if it is a time-bound initiative ensures all partners understand its objectives. This clarity also avoids the risk of a "fly in, fly out" approach which can break trust with communities. Furthermore, different partners bring different capabilities to the table. Upfront conversations about what those capabilities are can help determine how scalable and sustainable the approach can be, and who might be able to take on the work after the initial phase or pilot is completed. While not all partnerships need to grow and expand, a scalable and sustainable partnership has the advantage of establishing a legacy for a company's global health work that will enable it to persist and expand.

> **Clarity of Purpose and Vision:** From the beginning, companies should define what success looks like and how the partnership fits into their broader global health strategy. For example, if the goal is to develop a pilot program for improving maternal health in a specific region, all partners should understand whether the initiative is a proof of concept for potential scaling or a targeted intervention with defined parameters. Clear communication of these objectives ensures alignment and sets realistic expectations for all parties involved.

> **Leveraging Partner Capabilities for Scale:** Different partners bring unique strengths to a collaboration, and an early assessment of these capabilities can inform how scalable and sustainable the partnership might be. For instance, local NGOs may excel at last-mile delivery and community engagement, while government ministries can integrate successful pilots into national programs. Private sector partners, in turn, can contribute resources, technology, or expertise that make scaling possible. Open conversations about each partner's role, capacity, and potential to sustain or expand the work can lead to a more thoughtful and strategic division of responsibilities.

> **Building for Long-Term Impact:** Even if a partnership is designed to be time-bound, companies should consider how its outcomes can have a lasting legacy. This might involve transferring knowledge and capacity to local partners, publishing outcomes or reports in multiple languages, designing programs that align with national health priorities, or creating interoperable digital tools and systems that can continue to deliver impact for different disease areas beyond the focus of the initial project. By embedding sustainability into the partnership design, companies can avoid short-term fixes and instead contribute to systemic change.

> **Balancing Scale with Sustainability:** While scalability can amplify the impact of a successful initiative, it's important to approach it thoughtfully. Scaling too quickly without sufficient resources or buy-in can lead to unsustainable growth and diminished results. Scale doesn't always need to be a goal. Sometimes, the highest-impact programs will affect far fewer people because they focus on behavior change and individual or community level support that takes more resources, more capacity, and more time. These programs can have far greater and more lasting impact than a broad-scale health education campaign, but they may reach fewer people. It is important for pharma companies to consider more than people reached as part of their global health or equity metrics to ensure they are having lasting impact on a community or populations. If scale is a goal, partnerships should aim for gradual, strategic scaling that considers resource availability, local infrastructure, and community needs. At the same time, ensuring sustainability often means planning for the eventual handover of responsibilities to local entities, with adequate training, funding, and support to maintain progress.

Company Spotlight

AstraZeneca's Health Heart Africa Program

AstraZeneca's Healthy Heart Africa (HHA) Program is an excellent example of piloting a health program and being intentional and thoughtful about scaling. Launched in Kenya in 2014 in collaboration with the Kenya Ministry of Health, AstraZeneca brought its vast experience in treating cardiovascular disease and portfolio of antihypertensives to create HHA to tackle the increasing burden of hypertension and cardiovascular disease across Africa. HHA started with the ambitious goal of reaching 10M people with high blood pressure across Africa by 2025, working with local and global partners to raise awareness of lifestyle choice and risk factors, train providers, drive care to lower levels of the healthcare system, and facilitate access to low cost, high-quality anti-hypertensives. The initiative began with an 18-month demonstration phase to understand how to integrate hypertension services into the existing healthcare service infrastructure. Given the novel nature of HHA and the lack of evidence of successful implementation of NCD interventions

within the primary care setting in African countries, AstraZeneca launched five different demonstration projects in collaboration with a range of partners to test which models worked in fragmented health systems. The findings informed future scale-up both within Kenya and across the region more broadly. After success in Kenya, HHA strategically expanded to Ethiopia in 2016, adapting to meet the needs of the Ethiopian healthcare system and bring care closer to the community. Work began again with a pilot phase and then scaled up across several regions. Always bearing in mind lessons learned and local contexts, HHA has since scaled to Tanzania in 2018, Ghana in 2019, Uganda in 2020 and Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Rwanda in 2021, and Nigeria and Zanzibar in 2022. Working with a range of government, bilateral, global NGO, and local NGO partners, HHA has seen great success, surpassing its target early. Recently, HHA has pursued another strategic scaling effort to integrate chronic kidney disease (CKD) into its hypertension and cardiovascular disease programs to holistically improve NCD care in Africa. 12

10. Integrate Inclusion and Localization Principles

Building partnerships grounded in trust, equity, and shared power is essential for meaningful and sustainable global health impact. By embedding principles of inclusion and localization into every stage of a partnership, private sector companies can foster collaborations that are truly equitable, community-centered, and transformative.

> **Grounding Partnerships in Trust and Open Dialogue:** Trust begins with transparent communication and shared decision-making. It is critical to establish clear agreements on how decisions will be made, how input from all partners will be assessed, and who will have control over resources such as budgets. Open discussions about power dynamics, particularly around leadership and decision-making, can help mitigate tensions and ensure that the partnership operates equitably. Structuring partnership kick-

offs with detailed discussions on ways of working, communication styles, feedback loops, and overall project expectations will help ensure a smooth start and execution.

> **Understanding Sociopolitical and Historical Contexts:** Pharma companies should seek to understand the historical power dynamics, colonial legacies, and structural inequalities that may be present in Global North/Global South partnerships and acknowledge the asymmetries in power, decision-making, and resources. Companies should be aware of perpetuating these power imbalances and seek to ensure equal ownership, voice, and decision-making as much as possible. Including voices from all partners during strategic decision-making and reducing administrative burdens (e.g., reporting burden or application burden) from local partners whenever possible can help to rebalance power.

Finally, companies should seek to fully understand the cultural, social, historical, and political environment in which they are operating through their partnership.

> **Investing in the Partner, Not Just the Project:** A partnership is most impactful when it invests in the growth and sustainability of the partner organization itself, rather than extracting value solely for the project's objectives. Companies should actively seek to understand what is most important to their partners and contribute in ways that strengthen their capacity. This might include offering unrestricted funding, supporting leadership development, helping with strategic planning, or leveraging employee expertise to address specific organizational needs. Embedding equity in partnerships extends beyond financial resources. It involves ensuring that local organizations have the tools, training, and support needed to engage fully and equitably. For example, pharma companies can provide funding for operational costs, invest in technology or infrastructure, and offer professional development opportunities to partners. Additionally, ensuring diverse representation in decision-making bodies and at key events helps to challenge existing hierarchies and create a more inclusive partnership dynamic.

> **Centering Localization Throughout:** In addition to ensuring that local needs and solutions are at the forefront when designing partnership strategies and global health priorities, pharma companies can consider ways to shift away from top-down approaches throughout the duration of the partnership. Instead of prioritizing their own priorities or expertise, companies should endeavor to uplift local voices throughout partnership design, implementation, and evaluation. This approach includes co-creating goals, strategies, and measures of success that align with local priorities and are informed by the lived experiences of the communities served. Because the private sector has unique access to influential spaces and decision-makers that local organizations often do not, pharma companies can amplify the voices and work of their partners by inviting them to speak at high-level events, facilitating introductions to key stakeholders, and highlighting their contributions in the media whenever possible. By intentionally creating space for local leaders, companies help shift power dynamics and elevate the credibility and visibility of community-based organizations.

> **Prioritizing Community Ownership:** Successful localization requires designing partnerships that prioritize local ownership and sustainability from the outset. Companies should focus on transferring knowledge, building local capacity,

and ensuring that programs are designed to align with existing community structures and priorities. By integrating localization principles, partnerships can avoid creating dependency and instead empower communities to sustain and expand the work independently over time. For longer-term, strategic partnerships, companies can focus on the equitable transfer of decision-making authority and resources to local leaders and implementers. Integrating co-creation, joint strategic planning, and mutual evaluation and feedback at timely components of the project are crucial to fostering a sense of ownership and shared accountability.

By integrating inclusion and localization principles, private sector companies can build partnerships that are not only more equitable and impactful but also better aligned with the needs and aspirations of the communities they serve. These partnerships move beyond transactional relationships to become transformative collaborations that drive systemic change and sustainable global health impact.

CONCLUSION

Pharma companies and other private sector health companies have an unprecedented opportunity to drive meaningful progress in global health through inclusive, strategic, and impact-driven partnerships. By adopting the ten principles outlined in this insights paper – ranging from defining clear global health priorities to embedding localization, equity, and sustainability – pharma can build partnerships that create lasting health improvements in LMICs and underserved communities.

Effective partnerships require more than financial investment; they demand thoughtful alignment with local priorities, co-creation with stakeholders, and a long-term commitment to strengthening health systems.

By leveraging their unique expertise, resources, and innovation, pharma can play a critical role in expanding access to medicines, improving health outcomes, and fostering sustainable healthcare solutions worldwide.

As the global health landscape continues to evolve, cross-sector collaboration and innovation will be essential to addressing emerging health challenges and closing gaps in care. By embedding these principles into their partnership approach, pharma can ensure their global health initiatives are not only effective and scalable but also equitable and sustainable – ultimately transforming lives and strengthening health systems for the long term.

About GHV

Founded in 2008, Global Health Visions (GHV) is a US-based consulting firm with global reach. Our unique structure allows us to draw on the rich technical skills and deep contextual knowledge of both our core team and expansive global network. Our core team consists of more than 50 experts based in 10+ countries in North America, Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. In addition, we regularly pull in expertise from a network of more than 300 consultants, collaborators, and partners across geographies and issue areas. A trusted collaborator, we fill organizational gaps at key inflection points. Serving a diverse set of clients including foundations, NGOS, multilaterals, and private sector companies – we work together to create a healthier world. Through advocacy, collaboration, and innovation, we help our clients accelerate impact. As a woman-owned firm, we are dedicated to putting **diversity, equity, and inclusion** at the center of our work, seeking to address systemic inequities in all that we do. We're proud of our supportive environment, which makes working for GHV flexible and rewarding. By setting the stage for excellence internally, we can ensure our exceptional consultants feel empowered to realize your goals.

How GHV Engages with Pharma to Drive Impact

With deep expertise across issue and disease areas, GHV supports pharma companies and their foundations as they seek to improve access and equity in health, both globally and domestically. Our experience co-creating multi-sectoral partnerships and global coalitions, designing tailored strategic and operational plans, conducting portfolio and partnership evaluations, and supporting policy, advocacy, and communications planning helps pharma companies reach their social impact and health equity goals. We offer strategic and operational planning, partnership facilitation, and impact measurement and communication. To learn more, visit **this page** on our website.

If you'd like to explore working with GHV, please contact Director of Global Health Innovations Rahima Dosani at **rahima.dosani@ghvisions.com.**

APPENDIX

A Note on Co-Creation[13]

Co-creation is an intentional design approach that aims to foster innovative approaches to problems and mutually beneficial outcomes through a participatory process. In global health, co-creation is a collaborative approach where private sector companies, local communities, governments, and other stakeholders jointly design and implement health interventions. This method ensures that solutions are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the communities they aim to serve. Co-creation is distinct from other collaborative or participatory practices because it involves sharing power and/or decision making. Co-creation is time-limited, transparent, and participatory. It enables different stakeholders to work together to identify new and existing solutions, build consensus around action, and refine plans to move forward with programs and projects. By engaging in co-creation, companies can leverage diverse perspectives, foster local ownership, and enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of health programs.

Companies may choose to utilize co-creation when addressing complex health challenges that require multifaceted solutions, when seeking to build trust and credibility within communities, or when aiming to ensure that interventions are culturally appropriate and widely accepted. Engaging in co-creation can also help identify potential risks and barriers early in the process, allowing for more adaptive and resilient program designs.

It is important to note that co-design is a collaborative process that utilizes collective brainstorming and problem-solving techniques to develop appropriate and suitable solutions. While co-creation and co-design are often used interchangeably, co-design is distinct because it does not involve the sharing of power or decision-making.

Common outcomes of co-creation for pharma companies and other private sector health companies may include:

> **Better understanding a problem:**
> Why use co-creation? Co-creation enables a stronger problem definition based on multiple, intersecting perspectives. It allows for a better capture of the context, needs, and constraints on the ground as well as a common understanding across stakeholders.
>
> Example: Issuing an asynchronous request for information (RFI) to allow for participants to share ideas on their own schedule, followed by a co-creation workshop to better understand the root causes of low uptake of rotavirus vaccines for children in rural Zambian communities.

> **Develop innovative solutions:**
> Why use co-creation? Co-creation allows for the generation of new solutions by bringing unheard or nontraditional voices into the design process and transforming traditionally siloed stakeholders into members of a collaborative community.
>
> Example: Leading single stakeholder co-creation meetings with a foundation or local government organization to design a mutually beneficial public-private partnership around improving maintenance of cold chain infrastructure in LMICs.

> **Build stronger partnerships:**
> Why use co-creation? Co-creation allows the creation of coalitions with complementary skills and resources. It can help attract new resource partners, catalyze collective action and commitments to an issue or sector, and build the network and reputation of participants.
>
> Example: Creating a multi-stakeholder workshop as part of a philanthropic granting program to facilitate networking among traditional and new local partners and garner feedback on pilot approaches to increasing uptake of cardiovascular health screening programs in Kenyan cities.

> **Improve continuous learning and adaptation:**
> Why use co-creation? Co-creation can help build appropriate feedback loops into your design process and validate ideas with partners, thereby increasing the efficiency of project implementation by building in early learning and continuous improvement.
>
> Example: Building in co-creation into the first six months of an emergency response program to develop and implement a COVID-19 vaccine distribution strategy in Southeast Asia through intentional partnerships with national health ministries, global health organizations, and local NGOs to ensure equitable vaccine access in urban and rural areas. Inserting reflection and opportunities for real-time feedback at key intervals throughout the project to implement systems for gathering community feedback during deployment and co-creating changes to interventions as needed.

APPENDIX

A Note on Human-Centered Design (HCD)[14]

Human-centered design in global health is a collaborative, user-focused approach to designing solutions that address health challenges by deeply understanding the needs, behaviors, and experiences of the people affected (end-users). HCD emphasizes empathy, co-creation, and iterative testing to develop interventions that are not only effective but also contextually relevant, culturally appropriate, and sustainable. The goal is to create products, services, or systems that are intuitive, desirable, and effective for the people they are intended to serve.

HCD can produce a range of outputs that help pharma companies and their partners understand user needs, identify pain points, and design effective, contextually relevant solutions. These outputs often serve as tools for communication, decision-making, and refinement during the design process. Some common outputs of HCD that may be particularly helpful for companies to engage in to best understand local contexts are listed below:

> **Journey mapping:** A tool that visually represents the user's experience as they interact with a product, service, or system over time. It outlines the key steps users take, highlighting their emotions, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. This approach helps designers and stakeholders understand the user's perspective and identify gaps or inefficiencies in the current process. By focusing on the user journey, organizations can uncover actionable insights to enhance the overall experience. For instance, a journey map could trace the steps of a patient accessing diabetes care in a rural clinic, from recognizing symptoms to receiving treatment.

> **Personas:** Fictional yet realistic profiles that represent different types of users based on research and data. They include details about demographics, behaviors, goals, and challenges, enabling designers to empathize with and address the needs of specific user groups. Personas help teams move beyond generic assumptions and create solutions tailored to diverse users. For example, a persona might depict a community health worker who uses a mobile app to track

immunizations, emphasizing their limited technology experience and the daily obstacles they face.

> **Prototypes:** Early versions of a product, service, or system that allow teams to test ideas and gather feedback before finalizing a solution. They can range from low-fidelity paper sketches to high-fidelity digital mockups, depending on the stage of the design process. Prototyping reduces risks by allowing teams to iterate quickly and refine their ideas based on real-world feedback. For example, a paper prototype of a mobile health app for community health workers could be used to gather input on functionality and usability.

> **Empathy maps:** Capture what users say, think, feel, and do in specific situations, offering a snapshot of their emotional and cognitive states. This tool is particularly useful for uncovering unarticulated needs and frustrations, helping designers develop solutions that truly resonate with users. By visually organizing insights, empathy maps ensure that user experiences remain central to the design process. For instance, an empathy map might detail the fears, hopes, and logistical challenges faced by mothers navigating antenatal care.

> **Service blueprints:** Diagrams that map out the entire service delivery process, including both visible (front-stage) and behind-the-scenes (back-stage) activities. They provide a comprehensive view of how services are delivered, highlighting roles, responsibilities, and potential bottlenecks. This tool helps align teams and streamline workflows to enhance service quality. For example, a service blueprint for a vaccine delivery program might outline steps from vaccine procurement to administration at the community level.

> **Concept posters and storyboards:** Visual summaries that explain proposed solutions or ideas using sketches, images, and short descriptions. These tools make complex concepts more accessible, fostering understanding and engagement among stakeholders. They are particularly effective for gathering feedback and building alignment within teams.
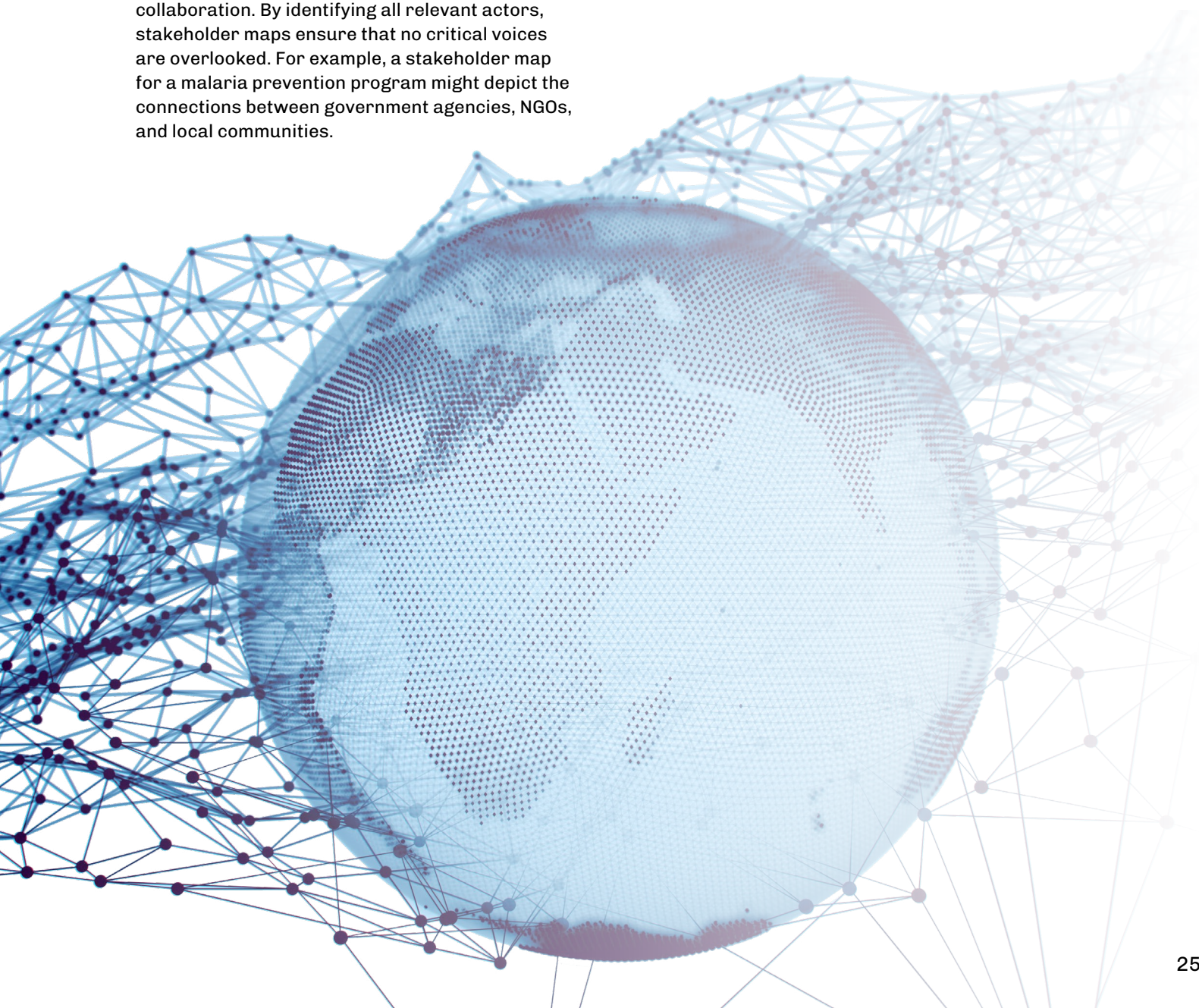
For example, a storyboard might depict how a telemedicine platform connects rural patients to urban specialists, illustrating the key interactions and benefits.

> **User flow diagrams:** Illustrate the step-by-step paths users take when interacting with a product, service, or system. These diagrams help identify potential barriers or friction points, ensuring that solutions are intuitive and user-friendly. By visualizing the process, teams can design experiences that are seamless and efficient. For instance, a user flow might depict the process of booking a healthcare appointment through a mobile app.

> **Stakeholder maps:** Visual representations of the key individuals or organizations involved in or affected by a solution. They illustrate relationships, power dynamics, and roles, helping teams strategize engagement and collaboration. By identifying all relevant actors, stakeholder maps ensure that no critical voices are overlooked. For example, a stakeholder map for a malaria prevention program might depict the connections between government agencies, NGOs, and local communities.

While human-centered design and co-creation are both important and complementary concepts for high-impact and innovative partnerships in global health, it is important to note they are distinct.

HCD can be a tool within a broader co-creation process, especially when specific user-focused components (e.g., product design or service delivery) are required. For example, a co-creation initiative to strengthen primary healthcare in rural areas might use HCD methods to design patient-centered clinic workflows or communication tools. Simply put, HCD is about understanding and designing for end-users, while co-creation revolves around collaborating with diverse stakeholders to address systemic challenges. Both approaches are vital to ensure that global health solutions are both user-centric and aligned with broader systemic goals.

ENDNOTES

1 https://ghu-impact-report.sanofi.com/article/5/

2 https://www.lilly.com/news/stories/lilly-expands-support-of-diabetes-impact-project-in-indy
https://www.inphilanthropy.org/sites/default/files/resources/DIP-IN%20Indiana%20Philanthropy%20Alliance%20Presentation%20051922.pdf
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