

International Health Coordination Centre (IHCC) Progress Report 2022-2024



Authors

This report has been developed by the International Health Coordination Centre (IHCC), Policy and International Health, WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Wellbeing, Public Health Wales: Liz Green, Laura Holt and Graeme Chisholm, consulting for Global Health Partnerships.

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This report is also available in Welsh
Mae'r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg



Executive summary

This report describes activities of the International Health Coordination Centre (IHCC), and the wider international health activity and partnership working which took place within NHS Wales between 2022 and 2024.

This report acknowledges that significant transformations have occurred since the pandemic and that the NHS in Wales continues to operate under very challenging circumstances. And yet throughout the report we showcase where individuals and organisations have succeeded in delivering services not only in Wales but also with partners internationally. The report presents a rich selection of international activities funded or delivered by the Welsh Government, from Health Boards and Trusts, Charities and cross Wales organisations.

The IHCC has been, and will continue to be, instrumental in ensuring that international learning and good practice is imported to and exported from Wales. The IHCC has demonstrated this by playing a pivotal role in two **UK Four Nations Global Public Health Forums**, attended by all four UK Chief Medical Officers. Building on the success of this, **Public Health Wales's inaugural International Public Health Forum** took place in November 2024 providing a cross-sectoral platform for senior leaders and colleagues to promote and share learnings from international health activities across Public Health Wales and partners, identifying future opportunities to engage in international partnership working and networks.

The Charter for International Health Partnerships in Wales: An implementation toolkit has also been successfully updated. It is hoped that this web-based resource will not only provide valuable material for all those involved in encouraging international health links but that it will continue to grow and evolve through the contributions of all partners involved.

Another notable development over the last two years is the transformation of the **Wales and Africa Health Links Network (WaAHLN)** into Global Health Partnerships Cymru (GHPC) in November 2024. Building on WaAHLN's impactful work, GHPC aims to advance its vision for a healthier and more equitable global community by offering strategic funding support, and advocacy, to drive positive and sustainable health outcomes through collaborative health partnerships.

The report concludes with the IHCC's plans for the coming two years. Encouraging a strategic approach remains a priority and so continued working closely with Welsh Government is important, as will be working more closely with cross-Wales organisations. Over the last two years, the Charter's values have been clearly illustrated in international activities undertaken across the NHS in Wales. While encouraging, the IHCC aims to expand and grow its work in this area to continue to embed the Charter's principles in practice. Practical support will continue to be provided to Boards and Trusts to encourage international engagement focusing particularly on systems to enable the sharing of good practice.

The proposed actions set out in this report; supporting a joined up strategic approach with the Welsh Government, building on the International Health Strategy in Public Health Wales fostering action around international health activity, expanding the charter for international health partnerships, will allow IHCC to lead over the coming years on supporting international engagement to improve the health and well-being of current and future generations in Wales and beyond.



Introduction

Following the previous report which covered the pandemic years and their immediate aftermath - 2018-2022 (Public Health Wales, 2022) this IHCC Progress Report takes stock of progress made over the years 2023-25 in international partnership working in the NHS in Wales. Two years on from the previous report there is a deepening understanding of how the pandemic has not only exacerbated social and economic inequalities but has permanently changed our societies.

Opportunities can be drawn from these experiences. The pandemic clearly highlighted the importance of public health and a healthy functioning society and economy and how these are intertwined. New ideas such as the 'well-being economy' have gained greater traction with global movements emerging that are beginning to rethink economies more around people, the environment and the planet. Public Health Wales, with its WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being and the Welsh Government are at the vanguard of this movement. Wales has built significant momentum in developing its reputation as a forward, outward looking nation committed to a long-term sustainable future built on a well-being economy and the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

As Wales continues to expand and strengthen its impact on the global stage it does so in the knowledge that the Wales International Strategy (The Welsh Government, 2020) underpinned by several forward-thinking pieces of legislation form solid foundations on which to do so. This is precisely where the International Health Coordination Centre (IHCC) has been and will continue to be instrumental. The IHCC allows international learning and good practice to flow from and to Wales through enabling strategic and local partnerships. The IHCC's position as a focal point for health-related international work across the NHS in Wales, for example as a hub for sharing and building on the excellence, expertise, passion and commitment of the Welsh health community, has never been more needed. While the IHCC's mission and objectives remain the same, this report takes stock of what the IHCC, Welsh Government, NHS Trusts and groups such as GHPC have achieved over the last two years and highlights the changes required to realise further progress.

In this report you will find many examples of activities from across Wales which illustrate not only resilience and ingenuity but that also showcase the values set out in the Charter for International Health Partnerships. Namely the need for all these initiatives to demonstrate organisational responsibility, to be truly reciprocal, to seek out good practice and that they are likely to prosper only when good governance is in place. These examples not only illustrate the difficulties of delivering such projects in current times, but also act as an inspiration to those considering embarking on similar activities to show that it is possible to do so and that by working and learning together each of us can contribute to the well-being of all.



Section one: **Background**

Established in 2013, the IHCC is based within Policy and International Health, WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Wellbeing (WHOCC) Directorate at Public Health Wales. The IHCC is a unique whole-of-Wales programme of work, bringing together all Health Boards and NHS Trusts. It promotes and facilitates international health partnerships, serving as a focal point for information sharing, knowledge exchange, collaboration and networking across the UK, Europe and the world. It has successfully established a strong network of key stakeholders within and beyond Welsh borders, including Welsh Government, Wales and Africa, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and UK, European and global partners and networks.

In 2023, Public Health Wales updated its International Health Strategy (Green L, Clark E, Holt L, Malcolm A, Ezenwugo G, Stewart D and Dyakova M (2023)) to better reflect the significant changes in the global landscape and to enable Public Health Wales' Long-Term Strategy (2023).

The IHCC continues to benefit from being embedded within Public Health Wales, under the umbrella of Public Health Wales's refreshed International Health Strategy and bringing wide international connections including those established through the WHO Collaborating Centre (WHOCC).

The International Health Strategy contributes to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act allowing NHS organisations to demonstrate global responsibility by engaging with international health work in line with best-practice guidance. More broadly the International Health Strategy aligns with the Welsh Government's International Strategy (2020) and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (2015).

The IHCC's work has continued to be centred around enabling and supporting implementation of the Charter for International Health Partnerships and promoting concepts such as Global Citizenship. While this report will reflect on the current Charter's effectiveness, the standards it sets remain a yard stick for international health partnerships and are based around four foundation stones:

- **Organisational responsibilities:** Recognising that strong organisational engagement and commitment are essential
- **Reciprocal partnership working:** Based on collaboration, equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit
- **Good practice:** Seeking evidence, celebrating positive results and learning from difficulties
- **Sound governance:** With clearly agreed objectives and responsibilities for all involved

The last progress report concluded with plans to strengthen the IHCC's work, and Wales's international health activity more generally. Section two presents these plans, along with a summary of actions and progress towards them.



Section two: **IHCC's Progress**



1. Create an NHS International Health Activity Group

The IHCC has led on successfully merging the Charter Implementation Group and the International Health Strategic Advisory Group to bring together cross-sectoral representatives from Welsh Government, academia, NHS Wales, Third Sector and the wider UK. This group now has over 40 members and meets on a quarterly basis to share learnings and best practice on international health activity.



2. Prepare the ground for a refreshed approach to international health in Wales

Public Health Wales conducted a scoping review as part of the International Health Strategy refresh. This included the mapping of international activity across the organisation and an extensive engagement and consultation exercise via surveys and key informant interviews.

The Charter was reviewed, and the Charter Toolkit has also been successfully updated bilingually.



3. Engage with NHS organisations to raise the profile of international health activity

The IHCC has been engaging with NHS organisations on international health activity through convening the International Health Activity Group chaired by Public Health Wales. The Group discusses and shares the future direction of international health activity and collaboration, ensuring alignment with national and organisational strategic priorities.

Public Health Wales' inaugural International Public Health Forum took place in November 2024 offering across Wales an opportunity to share insights from international health activities and research as well as discuss opportunities for future engagement in international health partnerships. The IHCC has conducted several Global Citizenship workshops in collaboration with the Welsh Centre for International Affairs. NHS engagement has also been strengthened via the IHCC's quarterly newsletter.



4. Implement recommendations of the Charter implementation evaluation

Progress has been made on the evaluation's recommendations most notably around communications with the development of a regular news bulletin and promotion of the Charter at conferences. Resources have also been developed such as the revised Charter toolkit. Platforms for sharing best practice such as the NHS International Health activity group and International Health Forum have been established.

Other achievements

In February 2024, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Welsh Government and the World Health Organisation, Europe was renewed, helping to strengthen connections internationally and provide a strong lever to support Wales in achieving the goals of becoming a healthier and more prosperous nation.

In September 2023 and May 2024, the IHCC supported the organisation of, and acted as secretariat to, two UK Four Nations Global Public Health Forums, chaired by Wales' Chief Medical Officer. The bi-annual Forum was established to support information sharing on global public health issues and initiatives across the four UK nations.

In October 2024, representatives from the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) and the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) joined Public Health Wales, Welsh Government health leaders and a representative for the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for a collaborative and learning exchange. The IHCC supported the organisation of the visit and has since facilitated follow-up meetings for continued collaboration, deepening future joint working on topics such as Health Impact Assessments.



Section three: **International Health activity across NHS Wales**

Global Health Partnerships Cymru

In November 2024, Global Health Partnerships Cymru (GHPC) was formed following a merger between Global Health Partnerships (GHP), formerly known as THET (The Tropical Health and Education Trust), and the Wales and Africa Health Links Network, which had been operating for over fifteen years. The organisation collaborates extensively with the Welsh development sector, including Hub Cymru Africa, the Sub-Saharan Advisory Panel, and the Wales and Africa Programme at Welsh Government, along with Public Health Wales. GHPC's mission is to work with partners, global health workers, and stakeholders to strengthen capacity in global health systems and enhance workforce capacity in low-and-middle-income countries.

As GHPC embarks on implementing its 2024-2027 plan, its strategic objectives are to prioritise sustainable health improvements through shared learning, enhanced healthcare service delivery, and community engagement. Their plan has been fully informed through engagement with over thirty health partnerships, using the successes and learning from the previous cycle to feed into GHPC's roadmap for achieving its goals in the next three years.

CHARTER VALUES SYNERGY

GHPC's strategic objectives and approach complements all the Charter's foundation stones of organisational responsibilities, reciprocal partnership working, good practice and sound governance:

Core Values:

GHPC's values of Partnership, Co-Leadership, Humility, and Needs-Based Action are foundational to its approach:

- Partnership focuses on building long-term, trusting relationships where responsibilities and resources are equitably shared.
- Co-leadership empowers stakeholders to co-create initiatives, ensuring sustainable leadership and community ownership.
- Humility fosters an open-minded approach, valuing local expertise and adapting to the unique needs of each community.
- Needs-Based Action ensures interventions address the specific challenges faced by communities, fostering sustainable impact.

Through collaborative health partnerships, strategic funding support, and advocacy, GHPC aims to drive positive and sustainable health outcomes. By empowering communities and fostering shared learning, GHPC continues to advance its vision for a healthier and more equitable global community

Engagement with health partnerships

GHPC's commitment to fostering collaboration will continue with ongoing engagement with health partnerships, supporting knowledge exchange and skill-building. Planned initiatives include hosting three Shared Learning Events (SLEs) – providing for example, expert sessions on Anti-Microbial Stewardship, as well as workshops facilitating discussion on the challenges and achievements of international health partnerships in Wales with African counterparts, and annual and biannual conferences to enhance communication and share best practices.

By providing a platform for health workers to connect and share insights, GHPC ensures that healthcare improvements are informed by diverse expertise and local knowledge.

Global Summit workshop with health partnerships, September 2024



Vice Chair, Israa Mohammed, Chair, Julia Terry, GHPC and GHP CEO, Ben Simms

Funding and grant applications

Recognising the critical role of financial support in global health projects, GHPC also focuses on raising awareness of funding opportunities and facilitating grant applications for its health partnerships. In collaboration with Hub Cymru Africa and Global Health Partnerships, GHPC provides regular updates on funding calls and aims for a 10% annual increase in grant applications submitted by international health partnerships. This objective aligns with GHPC's broader mission to empower communities and improve health outcomes through sustained support.

Stakeholder engagement and advocacy

GHPC's partnership-driven approach extends to stakeholder engagement, where the organisation works closely with NHS Wales Health Boards and Trusts, governments, and global health advocates to influence policy and promote collaborative global health efforts. Each of GHPC's committee members has individual health partnerships they regularly connect with and provide information about funding opportunities and education events.

Malawi/Wales Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) Pharmacy project

A pharmacy led partnership between pharmacy professionals throughout Malawi and Wales has trained over 400 health workers in Malawi to understand the threat from **Antimicrobial Stewardship** (AMS) and implement AMS activities in their healthcare institutions. The project has promoted the sharing of good practice and the gathering of prescribing data as part of the Global Point Prevalence Survey (GPPS) - a standardised method for surveillance of antimicrobial use.

This partnership run by the Pharmaceutical Society of Malawi (PHASOM) and The Welsh Antimicrobial Pharmacy Group (WAPG) hosted through Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) builds on work conducted through an earlier Commonwealth Partnerships for Antimicrobial Stewardship project funded through Global Health Partnerships.

The partnership has placed volunteers to coordinate and run the programme throughout Malawi and are currently training health workers in seven hospitals. All tertiary and referral hospitals in Malawi: Kamuzu Central (KCH), Mzuzu, Zomba and Queen Elizabeth (QEH) hospitals along with three district hospitals, Mchinji, Ntcheu and Dedza use the hub and spoke model with KCH as the hub. In addition, a training toolkit has been developed by volunteers from PHASOM and WAPG on AMS for the staff in those facilities.

GOOD PRACTICE

The team has trained the AMS committees across all seven hospitals, having supported their set up, chairs and terms of reference for those groups. Working with the hospital management team, they have also ensured that AMS is an embedded programme that is monitored and driven forward across the country's health system.

To launch the partnership the core members from WAPG attended a launch event, visiting all seven facilities in Malawi. In June 2024 five pharmacists from Malawi visited several hospitals, a GP surgery and community pharmacies in Wales and experienced AMS ward rounds, multidisciplinary team working, a meeting with the director of Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Wales and representatives from Cardiff University who gave guidance on how to approach publishing the work.



BIDIRECTIONAL LEARNING

"An experience we will never forget. We had the chance to learn from pharmacists practicing on another continent who enthusiastically engaged and participated in ward rounds, teaching sessions and had insightful comments on how we practice in the UK and appreciated how we have become part of the MDT" Bronglais General Hospital, Pharmacy Team

"Through the visit we were able to appreciate the roles of pharmacists in specialized care (some of the things which we just read about or hear from conferences) like Emergency department, Palliative care etc. To go through the ward rounds with a multidisciplinary team opened my mind to the interventions pharmacy professionals can make at the bedside." William Mpute – President of the Pharmaceutical Society Malawi (PHASOM)

Key lessons learned from this international health partnership include:

- The value of pharmacists in the clinical management of patients and how that has impacted the development of specialist roles in the UK.
- Establishing multidisciplinary AMS committees can help drive AMS engagement throughout facilities.
- The importance of patient education – similar challenges in Malawi and in Wales exist regarding language barriers as well as reaching people in rural areas.



Interburns - Building capacity for the effective management of burn injuries

Funding through the Welsh Government's Wales and Africa programme has supported a group of nurses from a burns unit in Tanzania to receive training in burn treatment and care.

Burn injuries are one of the most challenging to treat. Nursing plays a crucial role in burn care. An estimated 180 000 deaths every year are caused by burns globally. The vast majority occur in low- and middle-income countries (WHO, 2023). As a result, burn patients often suffer from long-term complications, lifelong disabilities, stigma and increased poverty.

Interburns was founded in 2006 to improve burn care and prevention in low-and-middle-income countries. Since its establishment, the Cardiff based charity has grown into a leading international network for training, education and research in burns. They secured a £25,000 grant from the Wales and Africa scheme to deliver a training course for burns unit nurses in Tanzania.

Advanced treatment

Advanced Burn Care (Nursing) is a five-day programme covering all aspects of treatment -including dressings, pain management and nutrition to rehabilitation and palliative care. The training was developed from previous programmes delivered in Bangladesh, Ghana, Nepal and Ethiopia.

32 people attended the training in February 2023 at Muhimbili National Hospital. The course was led by a participant from a previous Essential Burn Care session, which demonstrates the programme's success in building capacity and leadership amongst burn care professionals. A pre and post course assessment showed that the majority of the participants found the course very useful and will apply the learning in their working environment.

"The experience has been enriching, a beautiful reminder and a good place to learn from others, what they do and how and what works in their setting. I really enjoyed the training; I will be an ambassador for everything I have learned." Nurse attending the course

Putting Wales on the map

Interburns is a good example of how a Welsh charity can grow through Welsh international health development funding, whilst continuing to deliver significant benefits to Wales as it expands. As the International Health Activity in Wales Rapid Review (Chalmers, 2021) highlighted, Interburns represents a 'best-practice model of efficient use of resources and meaningful partnership engagement' and it has 'put Wales on the map as a global leader in burns care'.

Dutch Ministry of Health Visit to Wales



In October 2024, representatives from the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) and the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) joined Public Health Wales, Welsh Government health leaders and a representative for the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for a collaborative and learning exchange.

Sumina Azam, National Director for Policy and International Health, said:
"It was a huge privilege to welcome delegates from RIVM and the Netherlands Ministry of Health. We found we had much in common, such as ongoing work on climate change, environmental health, health impact assessment and futures. We had the opportunity to reflect and share learning with each other on our public health challenges and our work to address these."

There was agreement on the role of public engagement in policymaking and a shared commitment to fostering community involvement in health initiatives.

Next Steps: Participants agreed that identifying opportunities for collaborative research and policy action in a few areas would be of mutual benefit and were committed to deepening future joint working.

The IHCC supported the visit and has since facilitated follow-up meetings for continued collaboration.

Life for African Mothers

Life for African Mothers (LFAM) was founded in June 2005, following a BBC Panorama episode, focusing on maternal mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa. At that time, global estimates indicated that approximately 535,900 maternal deaths occurred annually, with 50% (about 270,500) of these deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hill, K. et al. 2007). The charity, then known as Hope for Dr Grace Kodindo was named after an inspirational obstetrician, who was trying to provide the best possible care, in challenging circumstances where a sparsity of key medications was a major contributing factor in these deaths.

In May 2007, the charity received a request from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to help Sierra Leone and Liberia, two war torn countries whose health systems had been decimated by conflict.

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Angela a Senior NICU Nurse was given the opportunity to be seconded to the charity from her clinical role and began a series of visits to the two countries.

Following discussions with Dr Kodindo, the UNFPA representatives and local obstetricians, it was decided that the charity's work would have the greatest impact if it concentrated on the single largest killer of mothers, (at the time, a third of the total deaths). This was post-partum hemorrhage and for which there was a cheap medication called Misoprostol, to prevent, or treat this condition. At that point, LFAM were introduced to an organisation in the UK, which sources high quality, new medications, to be shipped to low-income countries and distributed free of charge.

Over the coming years, the provision of the medication has been enhanced by visits to

both countries, undertaken by UK midwives and medical staff, who have shared their knowledge and skills. The wars had had a major impact on staffing and skills training. An added benefit of the visits was that UK clinicians left feeling more appreciative of the UK systems, with more of an awareness of waste for example.

LFAM continue to send the medication to both countries, and specific areas of other countries, where LFAM had personal contacts. LFAM was awarded grants from the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to provide Covid awareness in the poorest communities in both countries during the pandemic. These were delivered by their in-country representatives and volunteers.

In 2023/24, LFAM developed the idea of creating local midwifery champions. Across Sierra Leone, senior midwives have received additional training by their volunteers. These champions are now delivering skills sharing workshops to their colleagues, sometimes recorded for the team in the UK. This has the benefit of greater impact for the funds available, and local dialects can be used to improve understanding.

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Government of Sierra Leone has given their champions, protected time to travel to the furthest reaches of the country, a testimony to the success of having ownership of the project.

LFAM has, to date, facilitated the delivery of medication to allow over 1.5 million women to access it free of charge, a significant achievement for a small organisation.

Expanding a model of integrated primary healthcare in Mbale, Uganda

Partnership Overseas Networking Trust (PONT) is a charitable organisation twinning communities in South Wales and Mbale, Uganda. Since its inception in 2005, it has linked over one hundred organisations and 1,500 individuals from both communities to work together in partnership, with the aim of alleviating poverty in Mbale. Their project areas include primary healthcare, motorbike ambulance service, engineering workshop, livelihoods, support for vulnerable children, education, and a wildlife centre.



SOUND GOVERNANCE

PONT has formed a unique coalition with four District Government offices and eight Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's), forming a single organisation called Mbale Coalition Against Poverty, (Mbale CAP) through which all their projects are delivered. Bringing together Ugandan NGO's and District Government, with clear lines of responsibility and accountability has encouraged all partners to work towards common goals.

A Welsh Government grant enabled the partnership to train 240 new Community Health Workers (CHW's) in 2023. The partnership followed the Ugandan Government Community Health Promoter Curriculum, which consists of four weeks of in-person teaching, punctuated by at least two weeks of field work. Here learners have practical sessions and are supported in tasks such as making village maps, cleaning water sources, and undertaking a problem analysis of their communities with intervention plans. Trainers are provided by the district health office and the training is overseen by Mbale CAP's healthcare coordinator. Candidates are

chosen by local village leaders after having already shown a concern for health and hygiene in their villages. Key objectives for CHW's are to reduce maternal mortality, reduce child mortality in under-five's, to promote good hygiene and sanitation and refer appropriately.





GOOD PRACTICE

Monitoring is conducted annually when the PONT medical team visit. In February 2024, the team met PONT's newly trained CHW's and witnessed them teaching "the 14 points of a healthy home" and a demonstration of how to construct a simple but effective hand washing facility, a "tippy tap." CHW's and beneficiaries reported the positive impact that the health workers are having and the confidence they bring to their communities.

To date, the partnership has trained 1,440 CHW's workers and has a fleet of thirty-two motorbike ambulances. The partnership has learned that to fully empower CHWs, they need to increase ambulance provision in tandem with their training. Otherwise, empowered CHWs will diagnose illness and spot danger signs in pregnant women without the ability to call for urgent transfer to a medical facility. The partnership has developed local support for this ambition, engaging district health leaders and the Umukuuka ("King" of the Bar Masaaba people).

Their goal is to increase provision by establishing an integrated primary healthcare/motorbike ambulance service for the whole Mbale region of Uganda, providing invaluable, combined healthcare to another 700,000 people in poor rural villages.

Due to the cost of and difficulty in importing equipment, the partnership made the decision to use their own engineering workshop to start manufacturing in Mbale. A tuk-tuk ambulance was prototyped using a local chassis with a ready supply of spare parts. The vision became reality through a grant from Festival Medical Services and the prototype was registered and certified by the Ugandan Government. Further documentation and accreditation is needed to enable mass production, but the partnership plans to increase production soon, thus extending this life-saving model of integrated healthcare across the region.



International Learning Opportunities funded by the Welsh Government's Wales and Africa Programme



Zohra Omar, Lead Clinical Research Nurse, Prince Philip Hospital, Llanelli

The International Learning Opportunities (ILO) programme is funded by Welsh Government's Wales and Africa programme. It is aimed at experienced managers and leaders permanently employed within the public and voluntary sectors in Wales. It provides a unique opportunity to spend eight weeks in sub-Saharan Africa working on development projects, designed to enhance leadership skills.

Since 2007 over one hundred participants have been able to experience living, and working in, a low-and-middle-income country. In addition, participants have returned with strengthened skills and new-found insight on what it means to work resourcefully and adaptively - to help to improve the delivery of services for the people of Wales in the face of challenging times.

Zohra Omar was placed at Mbale Regional Referral Hospital in Uganda from January to March 2023. Mbale Regional Referral Hospital is in the east of Uganda in the foothills of Mount Elgon. It serves a population of 4.5 million and accepts all referrals from district hospitals, health centres and private clinics. The facility serves more than fifteen districts in the eastern region.

Zohra works as a lead clinical research nurse managing a team at Prince Philip Hospital

in Llanelli. She works on the delivery of a wide variety of commercial and non-commercial clinical research ranging from oncology stroke and diabetes to surgical and respiratory studies, mostly in the secondary care setting within Hywel Dda University Health Board.



Administration entrance to MRRH



Main entrance to MRRH



Road to MRRH wards and departments

Zohra's placement focused on clinical research and a quality improvement programme in the hospital's operating theatre.



Dr Adam Hewitt-Smith, Zohra Omar, Joanne Nakibuule (Research Finance Lead) and Justine Khanyalano (Research manager)

The research team are in the process of opening an institute called the Elgon Centre for Health Research and Innovation (ELCHRI). This will facilitate autonomy to continue research studies with memorandums of understanding with Mbale Regional Referral Hospital, University of Busitema and other organisations.

As the Centre is a relatively new organisation with very few records, procedures or policies in place. Zohra worked closely with the Centre's research manager and research finance lead to prioritise the policies and documentation they needed to develop. The need for safeguarding and human resource documentation emerged as top priorities.

Zohra worked with Ugandan colleagues to develop an organisational safeguarding framework. As safeguarding local legislation is sparse, international standards were used to align with Ugandan legislation and organisational objectives.

Zohra developed and trained the research manager in, safeguarding training. A code of conduct was also developed in conjunction with the team for the Centre alongside a draft of various reporting mechanisms and human resource policies.



Research office situated in medical records department



New Surgical Building under construction



Hospital walkway – view towards maternity department

Zohra was motivated to volunteer to experience at firsthand a healthcare system in low-income country as well as to share her knowledge and clinical skills whilst experiencing a different culture. Zohra spoke to her line manager to discuss the possible benefits for her, the department and the wider health board of engaging in the programme. Having gained the support

of her manager and wider team Zohra returned with enriched communication skills, resource management and systems logistics capabilities as well as enhanced strategic thinking and problem-solving skills and thinking about longer term sustainability. Zohra also returned with lifelong connections and ideas for future collaborations.

UK Four Nations Global Public Health Forum

In September 2023 and May 2024, the IHCC supported the organisation of, and acted as secretariat to, two UK Four Nations Global Public Health Forums, chaired by Wales' Chief Medical Officer. The bi-annual Forum was established to support information sharing on global public health issues and initiatives across the four UK nations.

The UK Four Nations Global Public Health Forum:

- Supports understanding of global public health information and intelligence across the Four Nations.
- Suggests ways in which all four nations can contribute to a coherent UK global public health offer.
- Identifies opportunities to collaborate on international health system strengthening activities in support of UK/Four Nations commercial interests and workforce development.
- Supports UK-wide collaboration on utilisation of funding available for international public health initiatives.

- Identifies examples of good practice and potential for joint working and sharing of expertise in matters related to international public health.
- Requests input from other countries in relation to public health threats.
- Recognises each of the four nations work to support partners overseas.
- Helps enable and support international accreditation and participation in global/international fora.

The Forum was attended by representatives across UK public health bodies including all four Chief Medical Officers. At May's forum, Wales's showcased its international ambitions via the Welsh Governments International Strategy and Public Health Wales' International Health Strategy and both presentations received excellent commendations. The forum will continue with Scotland hosting the next meeting where the IHCC will continue to support Wales representatives.

Swansea-Panzi alliance for the reconstruction and care of victims of conflict-related sexual violence (SPARC)

The Panzi Foundation and Hospital in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo was set up by Congolese gynaecologist Dr Denis Mukwege in 1999 and has treated over 85,000 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Dr Mukwege received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 in recognition of this work.

This project is a ground-breaking initiative to explore novel ways in which advanced plastic surgery techniques can help survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. The project is led by Iain Whitaker, Professor of Reconstructive Surgery and Regenerative Medicine and Consultant Plastic Surgeon, Swansea University Health Board and Dr Denis Mukwege. It is a collaboration between ReconRegen, Swansea University and the Panzi Hospital, with support from her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Edinburgh.



Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Edinburgh visited the Panzi Foundation in Bukavu in late 2022. Following this visit, it was Her Royal Highness' suggestion that Dr Mukwege and Professor Whitaker meet to explore whether expertise from The Scar Free Foundation could be offered to support the work of Dr Mukwege and his team in addressing the injuries experienced by survivors of CRSV.

Dr Mukwege and Professor Whitaker agreed that a visit to Panzi Hospital was essential to gain first-hand insight into the clinical challenges. The Welsh Government's Wales and Africa Grant Scheme provided funding to enable the Swansea team to travel to Panzi Hospital in July 2024.

Ahead of the exploratory visit, Panzi Hospital identified four key areas of need:

- Introduction to advanced reconstructive surgical techniques.
- Improved training provision, with a particular emphasis on simulation.
- Research skills training.
- Advocacy and awareness.

"The visit to the Panzi Hospital was incredible, it was one of the highlights of my career on both a personal and professional level. I was so moved by the incredible resilience and positivity of the women at Panzi, and the work Dr Mukwege has done over two decades. We are committed to working with our colleagues at Panzi to improve care and drive forward developments to make life-changing differences to victims."
Professor Iain Whitaker. Chair in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Swansea University

Surgical skills

Professor Whitaker's team saw ten patients in clinic with Dr Mukwege. All had very severe injuries following historic events of CRSV. Although time in theatre was limited during the short exploratory visit, Professor Whitaker and his surgical team were able to perform reconstructive procedures on three

patients. In all cases, Panzi Hospital surgeons operated alongside Professor Whitaker and his team and were introduced to advanced reconstructive techniques during these procedures.



Training provision

Simulation models have been used in surgical training in high-resourced countries for many decades and recent studies have highlighted their potential in countries where resources are more limited. Professor Whitaker teamed up with Dr Hari Arora to create 20 prototype anatomically correct surgical training models which were brought to Panzi Hospital for evaluation. Panzi clinicians' feedback will be used to inform subsequent iterations of the models.



Research skills training

Studies have estimated that only 7% of academic global surgery publications are written exclusively by authors in low-and-middle-income countries. The academic paper, 'Evaluating the ANSWERS 3D-printed training model for reconstructive surgery in conflict-related sexual violence' was an early collaborative research output following the July visit and it is hoped it will lead to more papers led by or exclusively authored by Panzi's clinicians.

Advocacy and awareness

The visit of the Swansea University team received special mention by the UK Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in her speech at the Residence of the British Consular Agent in Bukavu and was the subject of tweets on the British Embassy Kinshasa's official 'UKinDRC' X account. The visit was also the subject of press releases and social media messages by Swansea University and the Scar Free Foundation.

In October 2024, HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh and Dr Mukwege visited Swansea University to consolidate the alliance and plan next steps.

"We are proud that Wales is playing its part in supporting this international collaboration, which has received royal recognition from Her Royal Highness. Professor Whitaker's close collaboration with Dr Mukwege and the team at the Panzi Hospital will be highly instrumental in helping victims of sexual violence in conflict in the DRC and it's really humbling to see how Welsh research is helping in this field." **Michael Bowdery, Head of Programmes, Health & Care Research Wales**

The intention is that the SPARC initiative will be a long-term alliance between Swansea University and Panzi Hospital. The exploratory visit in July 2024 funded by the Welsh Government's Wales and Africa Grant Scheme was an important first action in creating this alliance.

A further visit to Panzi took place in early 2025 to carry out complex reconstructions on multiple patients with very severe injuries. At the same time, the VVF project will formalise links with the Panzi to develop methods of upskilling their surgeons through exchanges, surgical placements in Wales and novel medical education methods like simulation, virtual reality and augmented reality.

Related Resources:

Swansea University press release: <https://www.swansea.ac.uk/press-office/news-events/news/2024/10/plastic-surgeon-leads-trip-to-pass-on-vital-skills-to-help-victims-of-sexual-violence.php>

Bukavu visit: His Majesty's Ambassador to the DRC's speech <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bukavu-visit-his-majestys-ambassador-to-the-drcs-speech>

Voices of the Experts in our Midst – Wales

During 2023, Global Health Partnerships (GHP) (formerly THET), undertook an enquiry into the experiences of diaspora health workers living and working in the UK, with a particular focus on Wales. The enquiry came from the 2021 report: ***Experts in our Midst*** which explored the contribution that diaspora staff in the UK make to global health, and how that expertise, knowledge and leadership of these health workers is often overlooked.

The Enquiry sought to better understand the ways in which diaspora staff in the UK health system, particularly those from lower and middle-income countries (LMICs), contribute their time, resources and expertise to global health, and their view of their role within global health, and within the UK health system generally. 41% of responses to the survey came from within NHS Wales with representation from all Welsh Health Boards. Following this, GHP initiated qualitative research with a number of survey respondents in order to gather more in-

depth insights into the experiences faced by diaspora health workers (both positive and negative), their understanding of the value they bring to the UK health system and global health, and viewpoints on what and how improvements could be made to better platform and harness their experience, knowledge, leadership and passion.

Recognising the unique context of Wales within the UK, a separate Welsh report was developed, and insights into the global health 'ecosystem' and the status of diaspora health workers in Wales were gleaned from discussions with Government stakeholders such as Public Health Wales, Health Boards and the Chief Nursing Officer, as well as other key stakeholders such as Hub Cymru Africa and the Wales and Africa Health Links Network (WaAHLN, now Global Health Partnerships Cymru).

The Welsh report was informed by nearly 300 responses to the survey from diaspora health workers in Wales, as well as focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.



The report was a celebration of the role that diaspora health workers play, both in the UK health system and within health system strengthening initiatives globally. It built on GHP's perspective that diaspora health workers possess unique perspectives and skills borne of their knowledge and understanding of multiple health systems and contexts, and the innovation and improvement that can result from that knowledge. It highlighted how that value may be better recognised and applied within the UK and within global health practice. It also highlighted the challenges that diaspora health workers continue to face, including issues with induction in the UK, the experience of having qualifications recognised and therefore being underutilised, difficulties with progression, and issues around discrimination and racism.

The report discusses the opportunities for improvement. For example, the role of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan; the potential of funding structures like the Wales and Africa grants; a the International Learning Opportunities (ILO) scheme to have specifically diaspora-focused initiatives; and the role of NGOs in Wales to support the development of Diaspora Health Organisations and/or the small scale diaspora-led global health initiatives that are numerous but which often go unrecognised by institutional funding mechanisms.

GHP Cymru launched the Wales ***Voices of Experts in our Midst – Wales*** at the Senedd in January 2024 celebrating the work of diaspora health workers in Wales whilst acknowledging the ongoing challenges people experience. GHP Cymru plans to continue this work to ensure that the NHS must centre inclusion and race equality in its leadership and decision-making, ensuring the Welsh health system is fit for the future, benefitting fully from the wealth of knowledge and expertise in its diverse healthcare workforce.

The [English language version](#) of the report as well as a [Welsh language version](#) are available on the GHP website.

Global Citizenship Workshops

"This work is throwing a light on areas that we are collectively afraid to speak about because we don't want to 'get it wrong' with terminology and stereotypes. However, it's only when we are confident enough to speak out about what we understand that we can work together to develop something better."
Amber Demetrious, Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA)

The IHCC and the Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA) have been promoting global citizenship training via a series of in person and online global citizenship workshops (7, from 2022-24) across NHS Wales partners and networks. In addition, 3 guest lectures have taken place at Cardiff University.

The workshops have supported healthcare providers across a variety of institutions explore globalisation and the obstacles to working in global partnership both online and in person.

As part of the workshops, participants were asked what they understood by the term global citizenship and at the end were asked how they would further this work in their institutions.

"After today, I'm wondering how global relations can implement changes in healthcare." A participant at a workshop

RECIPROCAL PARTNERSHIP WORKING

"What has felt important to me is how we have truly collaborated on this initiative and with ongoing communication before, during and after the sessions we've developed a deeper understanding of our partners needs and how they can use this training in practical ways in their workplaces." Laura Holt, IHCC



To help make global citizenship more understandable, the IHCC has created a one page poster. The IHCC, along with the WCIA are also reviewing the e-learning modules to update them, make them shorter and more accessible. Inspired by Public Health Wales's work, the Scottish Global Citizenship programme is also currently creating its own Global Citizenship training closely aligned with this Welsh initiative.

International Horizon Scanning and Learning Reports

International Horizon Scanning and Learning reports were initiated in 2020 as part of the COVID-19 response and recovery measures in Wales. The scope of the reports was expanded in Spring 2022 to include priority and emerging public health concerns identified by key stakeholders, such as Welsh Government and NHS Executives.

The reports are produced quarterly and aim to provide a high-level summary of international learning and countries' best practice, and to communicate key findings to decision- and policymakers in an easy to understand and clear way.

Over 50 reports have been produced, with recent topics including:

- Fiscal measures to address obesity
- The commercial determinants of health
- The impact of poverty on babies, children and young people
- Embedding prevention in primary and community care
- Five essential conditions for health equity
- Mental health and well-being of refugees and asylum-seekers

These reports have been used to inform Public Health Wales and Welsh Government policies and programmes of work and have featured in resources and conferences including the European Public Health Conference 2023 and the Nursing in Practice newsletter in 2024.

In addition, positive feedback has been received from PHW, Welsh Government Senedd Research, Welsh Government and the World Health Organization.

"This report highlights the disturbing impact of commercial strategies on population health across a wide range of industries. Identifying the strategic approaches countries have taken to counter that impact is a very welcome contribution to our work in addressing those impacts."

World Health Organization

Related Resources: [International Horizon Scanning - World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being](#)



Enabling a Well-being Economy in Wales: Collaboration between the World Health Organization and Public Health Wales

"The NHS Wales Charter for International Health Partnerships has served as a blueprint for progressing our international collaboration and networks, including with the WHO to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship and a systematic and sustainable approach."

Dr Mariana Dyakova, Public Health Consultant, Deputy Director and Head of International Health, Policy and International Health, WHO CC on Investment for Health and Well-being at Public Health Wales



Wales is shifting towards a well-being economy, an economic system that serves people and the planet rather than fostering profit. The well-being economy approach provides a way to re-shape the economy and work across sectors to deliver on health and equity for current and future generations. In a well-being economy progress is measured by more holistic metrics beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with health and well-being at the core. Re-defining the purpose of the economy means putting mechanisms in place that enable the shift, such as legislation. In Wales, the well-being approach has been cemented in legislation and policies, such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) which redefines the goals

of economic development to prioritise the well-being of the population by living and working within planetary boundaries. Wales has been recognised as a champion nation in progressing the well-being economy internationally, becoming a member of the Well-being Economy Governments (WEGO).

The WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being (WHOCC) at Public Health Wales has longstanding relationships with the WHO Venice Office, developing and using innovative approaches and tools to identify and share solutions for policy and action progressing well-being economies, particularly through a public health lens. The WHOCC's work supports the WHO European Well-being Economy initiative with collaborative activities ranging from co-organising the inaugural WHO European Regional High-Level Forum on Health in the Well-being Economy, publishing the WHO Country deep dive on the well-being economy: Wales and progressing work on a WHO High Level policy dialogue hosted in Wales. Our work has facilitated and is delivering to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Welsh Government and the WHO Regional Office for Europe (2020-2026) focusing on Wales as a live innovation site for progressing well-being economies and health equity. This has also led to recognising Wales' First Minister Eluned Morgan as a WHO Well-being Economy Champion, inspiring other countries to take such an approach and place health and well-being high on the political agenda.

Collaborating with the WHO has enabled Public Health Wales to showcase and share best practices as well as capitalise on international learning to improve understanding and drive policies, processes,

and ways of working to enable the well-being economy nationally. It has also strengthened the role of public health and national public health institutes as not just beneficiaries but drivers of re-thinking and re-shaping current economic systems, engaging across international public health networks. This has also provided exciting opportunities for staff recruitment, retention and professional development with and beyond Wales. It has ultimately helped the organisation to grow, diversify and deliver more effectively on its strategic priorities.

Working together across sectors and borders, pooling expertise, know-how and resources is accelerating shared goals and actions to shift investment, spending and resources into well-being economies with health and equity at their core.

WHOCC has developed an animation on their approach to the well-being economy: <https://phwwhocc.co.uk/ih/our-work/sustainable-investment-for-health-well-being/>



Section four: **Proposed Actions for the Future**

The IHCC is committed to continue to lead, support and collaborate with NHS organisations across Wales and partners. Over the next two years, the IHCC aims to:

Supporting a joined up strategic approach

- Continue to work with the Welsh Government and partners at a strategic level to promote and enhance international health partnership working. This is important in setting strategic direction and providing a cross-sectoral forum for Welsh International Health partners and representatives to capture and promote synergies in international health activity.
- Work with Health Education and Improvement Wales to develop strategies to enable international health partnership working both with colleagues across the UK and overseas to support recruitment, retention and wellbeing of staff in NHS Wales and support shared learning which can be utilised in Wales to help to promote and protect Wales populations health and reduce inequalities.

Expanding the Charter for International Health Partnerships

- Increase engagement with NHS Boards and Trusts to help them to support international health partnership working, embed the charter's principles in their international health activities and to fully realise their well-being objectives.
- Expand the Charter for International Health Partnerships, providing an updated version that reflects the current international health landscape and challenges.
- Build on the success of the NHS International Activity Group and aim to secure senior representation from all NHS Boards and Trusts on the Group to allow clear oversight across each organisation's institutions and ensure Board buy-in.



Fostering action around International Health activity

- Expand the practical support provided to Boards and Trusts to encourage international engagement focusing particularly on systems for sharing good practice.
- Continue to publish quarterly newsletters, develop toolkits and case studies and other forms of practical support and make this available in an accessible way.
- Gather and disseminate impactful reporting from international activities carried out by NHS Boards and Trusts and partners clearly demonstrating the outcomes of the organisation's international work and its impact on partner organisations.
- With the help of partners, foster a culture across the Welsh health system that values the impact of experiences gained from international activity to help build the case for why international activity is good for individuals, for NHS Boards and Trusts and for Wales as a whole.
- Strengthen knowledge sharing and research networks that can create opportunities to disseminate good practice across the Welsh health system sharing innovations from other health systems adopted by individual Trusts and Boards across the NHS.
- Encourage global learning, the value of international health activities, and a recognition of the contributions of diaspora health workers by supporting NHS Boards and Trusts to champion diaspora engagement that values the expertise of diaspora healthcare workers in Wales and globally.

Build on the International Health strategy in Public Health Wales

- Drive momentum for the International Public Health Forum including high level representation from NHS Boards and Trusts as well as from cross-Wales organisations, the Welsh Government and partner organisations.
- Continue to support the UK Four Nations International Public Health meetings and facilitate joint working with the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) and the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM).
- Expand groups and training in global health and global citizenship, working with the Welsh Centre for International Affairs and partners to review and update the e-learning modules and lectures.

This progress report began by acknowledging that so much has permanently changed since Wales, the UK and the world emerged from the pandemic and that the NHS in Wales continues to operate at a challenging time. However, the report highlights many successful examples of IH activity and partnership working. These are just some of the examples of this work being carried out across the NHS and others in Wales.

The IHCC remains committed to continuing to lead, support and collaborate with NHS Wales organisations, partners across Wales and internationally to realise mutual benefits and well-being for all in the process.



Section Five: **Concluding Remarks**

This progress report began by recognising the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Wales, the UK, and the wider world. It acknowledged the ongoing pressures facing the NHS in Wales. Despite these challenges, the report highlighted how individuals and organisations placed international health at the centre of their work, contributing to service delivery both within Wales and with global partners. These efforts resulted in shared learning, mutual benefits, and improved well-being for all involved.

This report has also reflected on the IHCC's role in recent years and the context in which it operated. It outlined the achievements to date and reaffirmed IHCC's commitment to leading, supporting, and collaborating with NHS organisations in Wales and international partners.

Finally, this report demonstrates that the IHCC remains committed to continuing to lead, support and collaborate with NHS Wales organisations, partners across Wales and internationally to realise mutual benefits and well-being for all in the process



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International Health Coordination Centre

Public Health Wales NHS Trust
No 2 Capital Quarter
Floor 5
Tyndall Street
Cardiff
CF10 4BZ

Email enquiries@wales.nhs.uk

Call us **(+44) 02920 104 459**

@IHCCWales

www.phwwhocc.co.uk/ih/our-work/the-international-health-coordination-centre-ihcc