Submitted by the faculty of the Department of Global Health and Population

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent decades have witnessed large shifts in health and the burden of disease in populations throughout the world. Populations across the globe are aging, becoming more sedentary, and are increasingly concentrated in urban areas. Climate change is affecting disease patterns and transmission. Social and political dynamics are affecting population health in significant ways and are contributing to humanitarian emergencies and mass migration. Governments and non-governmental agencies are challenged continually to assess, prioritize, and finance health systems that promote equity and quality.

The study and the practice of global health demand engagement from multiple sectors and substantive areas of focus. Critical problems in this field are interdependent and need to be addressed using multidisciplinary approaches. This document describes the Strategic Plan of the Department of Global Health and Population ("GHP") for the next five years, from 2017–2022. It is developed factoring in the external context within which the department lives, and builds on the GHP Research Strategy Review that was developed by GHP faculty in 2015 and on the outputs of numerous GHP working groups and department-wide faculty retreats.

GHP's strategic plan is organized into four priority areas: 1) Curriculum and Pedagogy; 2) Creativity and Scholarship; 3) Connectivity within Harvard Chan, the University, and the World; and 4) Core Resources. The first two priority areas are core to the department’s research and teaching mission, while the latter two areas are enabling priorities to support our success. We have developed four goals under each priority area, with the fourth serving as a stretch goal. Each goal is connected to activities that we will pursue and we have developed a separate evaluation plan based on metrics to monitor our progress. It is our hope that the implementation of this plan will lead to an even stronger One GHP based on our core priorities of research, education, and engagement.
The GHP Strategic Plan reflects the changing context of global health and new developments in our understanding of how to tackle the world’s most pressing health needs. Our focus areas build on progress made in maternal and child health, expand our work in infectious and noncommunicable diseases, signify the importance of climate change and our environments, stress the critical role of health systems, and strive to advance scientific knowledge of health interventions and technologies.

The unfinished agenda

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) marked a landmark commitment by world leaders to tackle major development issues. Under the MDGs, the world has reduced child mortality rates by half and cut maternal mortality rates by 45 percent. The global community has increased the number of people living with HIV receiving antiretroviral therapy to 13.6 million, averting 7.6 million deaths since 1995; reduced malaria incidence by 37 percent and malaria mortality rate by 58 percent; and saved 37 million lives with improvements in tuberculosis care and treatment.

Despite these major achievements, 6 million children under five years of age died in 2015, largely from preventable causes. The world still has a way to go to address the unmet need for family planning and contraception, and to improve maternal care—only half of women globally receive the recommended amount of antenatal care. Health disparities within/between regions and countries have become increasingly stark as well. The maternal mortality ratio is approximately 14 times higher in low- and middle-income countries than in high-income areas. Over three quarters of new HIV infections occur in just 15 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. Of the 1.5 million new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa in 2013, half were in Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda. TB and malaria remain as significant global health challenges.

Emerging infections and non-communicable diseases

While much remains to be done in these areas, infectious disease threats and the rising burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) demand increased attention as well. Epidemics over the past decade—cholera, Ebola, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, measles, H1N1 influenza, Zika virus—have demonstrated the interconnectedness of our world and the need for effective public health systems that can prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks. The Ebola epidemic in West Africa claimed over 11,000 lives in 2014 and 2015. Zika virus has spread to 48 countries in the Americas as of the end of 2016, with over 2,300 cases of associated congenital syndrome.

At the same time, 16 million people die prematurely each year from NCDs, 80 percent in developing countries. NCDs accounted for 52 percent of global deaths in 2012, compared to 32 percent for all infectious disease and maternal and perinatal conditions combined. The number of deaths from NCDs is projected to increase from 38 million currently to 52 million by 2030. Cardiovascular disease, cancers, respiratory disease, and diabetes account for 82 percent of all NCD deaths. More effort is needed to address the major risk factors for NCDs—tobacco and alcohol use, diets, and physical inactivity—especially in developing countries.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015 reflect the changing context of global health, with attention to NCDs, major risk factors such as poor nutrition, and the importance of
health systems. The inclusion of mental health and substance abuse, for example, marks an important turning point in the way the global community views health and wellbeing. Increasingly, we understand that the interrelatedness of global health issues means we cannot think of health challenges in silos. We see that it is not enough to focus on saving lives of young children without improving wellbeing of adolescents; that we cannot place emphasis on physical growth without also addressing cognitive and social-emotional development cognitive development; and that we cannot promote health care without also advancing healthy environments. Furthermore, integrated efforts across sectors, including agriculture, energy and education in addition to current emphasis on health, are critical to achieving sustainable development.

### Environmental changes and demographic shifts

The challenges of maternal and child health, infectious diseases, and NCDs are being faced in the context of rapidly changing political, social and environmental contexts. Political and social instability hinder public health efforts. In 2015, the world saw a record high in the number of people displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. Refugees account for over 20 percent of the 65.3 million displaced persons today. At the same time, enormous migration and rapid urbanization are putting increased pressure on already stressed health systems. Over half of the world’s population is now urban dwellers, and this trend is only expected to increase more sharply. By 2050, urban populations will increase by over two thirds: over 6 billion people will be living in cities. This increase in urbanization will take place primarily in Asia and Africa. Particular attention in this context is needed to promote respect for the best interests of children and young adults and the development of systems that advance adolescent agency and participation.

Population growth also means environmental sustainability and the responsible use of limited natural resources are more important than ever. We are only beginning to understand the impacts of climate change on migration, water scarcity, agricultural production, natural disasters, and the spread of disease, among other effects. Malnutrition, for example, is responsible for a substantial burden of child morbidity and mortality. Food systems are inadequate in providing the caloric intake and macro and micronutrients necessary for good health, with equivalent negative consequences for the environment due to land clearing, loss of biodiversity, soil degradation, pesticide use and pollinator declines, among other issues. Climate change is exacerbating the ability of food systems to deliver proper nutrition, presenting an enormous, interdisciplinary challenge for the future of global health.

### Health systems and solutions

Today’s evolving environmental contexts have led to increases in risk factors and burden of disease, which disproportionately affect the poor and most vulnerable. Health systems are under increased pressure to keep pace. The global movement toward universal health coverage (UHC) exemplifies growing awareness of the importance of health systems toward improving global health. UHC brings together issues of access and quality of health services, human resources for health, health equity, and health financing. While the MDG era produced substantial gains in health, it has become increasingly clear that more effort is needed to strengthen health systems in order to have long lasting, meaningful health impact.
Today, 400 million people lack access to one or more essential health services like family planning or child immunization, and out of pocket payments make up over 30 percent of health expenditures globally. The world faces a shortfall of 7.2 million skilled health professionals needed to reach the recommended threshold of 34.5 workers per 10,000 population. Projections indicate that by 2035, 12.9 million health workers will be needed globally. Overall, there is a great need to understand the political, social and economic contexts which shape the ways health systems can address health problems.

New technologies and other innovations, such as mHealth, novel vaccines and diagnostics, and fortified crops, can help advance global health efforts. The data revolution and the rapidly changing context of information and communication technologies can be harnessed to advance population health. Mobile technology has allowed for advancements in information sharing and is now being used and tested for a range of public health applications, such as the provision of antenatal care information via text messages. Health technologies are being developed faster than ever before. For example, in 2016, several promising efforts have been undertaken to develop safe and efficacious vaccines targeting Zika and Ebola. New vaccines, however, will not be sufficient without additional research into dosing, delivery mechanisms, and targeting for vulnerable populations. Identifying the most relevant and useful interventions and technologies within specific contexts presents new opportunities for scientific advancement.
GHP STRATEGIC PLAN

GHP strives to advance knowledge toward solving today’s interrelated, complex health challenges. From scientific discovery to implementation science, we are working to identify the most effective interventions and how to bring them to scale. This Strategic Plan reflects the continuously evolving global health landscape. Epidemiological transitions and rapidly changing environments mean that we must simultaneously advance knowledge of population health and generate new evidence to improve health and wellbeing.

Our vision

To be a world leader in advancing global health and population studies through outstanding research and distinctive education.

Two guiding principles

Defining the path to achieving our vision, our approach is informed by two guiding principles:

1. We will foster individual excellence in our faculty, fellows, students, and staff.

2. We will work collaboratively as One GHP within and across Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Harvard University.

Four priorities

We have identified four priority areas as organization pillars for our strategic plan for the next five years. The first two of these areas are core to the teaching and research mission of the department, while the latter two are viewed as enabling priorities to support our success. The Four Priority areas are:

1. CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY: To enhance our stature as a leading department of global health and population studies—one that offers world-renowned degree programs and produces exceptional scholars.

2. CREATIVITY AND SCHOLARSHIP: To build on our collective assets to enhance interdisciplinary research and collaboration and promote both discovery and translational research.

3. CONNECTIVITY WITHIN HARVARD CHAN, THE UNIVERSITY, AND THE WORLD: To address major and complex global health challenges by building upon existing partnerships to create and sustain global networks of engagement.

4. CORE RESOURCES: To sustain a vibrant research and education enterprise supported by robust core resources and administrative systems.
Priority 1: Curriculum and pedagogy

To enhance our stature as a leading department of global health and population studies—one that offers world-renowned degree programs and produces exceptional scholars.

GHP strives to advance our educational offerings and maintain excellence in global health teaching. Since 2010, the School and department have engaged in major efforts to re-organize our education programs along the 2x2 framework (research and professional axis; and masters and doctoral axis). As a result, our faculty support the following four tracks:

1. Professional masters MPH-Global Health concentration (MPH 45; MPH 65);
2. Professional doctorate (School-wide DrPH);
3. Academic masters (SM2); and
4. Academic doctorate (Global Health & Population field of study as part of the PhD in Population Health Sciences).

All four tracks are at an early stage of reform and need continued nurturing and support to ensure that we achieve the desired goals for aligning competencies with course offerings, resulting in graduates who have both the knowledge and skills to lead and to succeed.

GOALS

GOAL 1: Pursue continuous improvement in curricular offerings, academic advising, and pedagogical approaches.

GOAL 2: Maintain and enhance efforts to attract students who are both outstanding and diverse.

GOAL 3: Spur increased collaboration in global health teaching across Harvard’s graduate schools and the College.

GOAL 4: Enrich students’ experience beyond the classroom through complementary activities and supplemental resources.
**ACTIVITIES**

**ENHANCE ADVISING AND MENTORSHIP.** In addition to assignment of a primary advisor to each student upon matriculation, group advising will be introduced to increase the breadth and depth of advising.

**IMPROVE TEACHING QUALITY.** We will make teaching more of a group effort and develop a sequencing of courses or groups of courses that build on each other in areas such as health systems, quantitative methods, and human rights.

**FOCUS ON MASTER’S DEGREE PROGRAM QUALITY.** We will consider the number of degree programs that GHP offers and the investment required to maintain highest quality in each.

**ENROLL A CRITICAL MASS OF PROMISING PHD CANDIDATES.** We will pursue training grants and other mechanisms to increase the number of doctoral students in the department.

**ANALYZE POTENTIAL FOR BLENDED DEGREE AND EXECUTIVE EDUCATION IN GLOBAL HEALTH.** We will evaluate the benefits and costs of a blended degree and work with the School’s Executive and Continuing Professional Education department to assess and possibly advance the market for executive programs in global health.

**PROMOTE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITIES IN ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS IN THE U.S. AND GLOBALLY.** We will increase opportunities and funding available to support field internships and practicum opportunities for all of our students and integrate activities to prepare for and build on these experiences.
Priority 2: Creativity and scholarship

To build on our collective assets to enhance interdisciplinary research and collaboration and promote both discovery and translational research.

GHP is proud to be the first department of population sciences in any school of public health with a focus on global health from the very beginning. Over the past half-century, faculty members, students, and researchers in our department have helped shape the field, and launched some of the major ideas in global public health and population sciences. In particular, GHP has long-standing and recognized research excellence in fields such as Maternal & Child Health; Nutrition; Decision Science; Behavioral Economics and Implementation Sciences; Population Bioethics, Humanitarian Studies and Human Rights; and Health Systems. To maintain our excellence in global health research and to meet the changing landscape of global health, we intend to build on our collective assets to enhance interdisciplinary collaboration and promote both discovery and translational research on current and future global health challenges. This will include expanding our research in areas such as global NCDs: global cancer and mental health; population ethics and priority setting; pandemic preparedness: surveillance of infectious diseases and antibiotic resistance; and climate change, sustainability and global planetary health.

GOALS

GOAL 1: Maintain excellence and increase diversity and numbers of faculty in strategically important areas.

GOAL 2: Bolster the research experience for individual faculty to support high quality, high impact output and career advancement.

GOAL 3: Cultivate and integrate postdoctoral fellows’ research to leverage faculty efforts and to develop a future cadre of global health scholars.

GOAL 4: Accelerate integration and collaboration across GHP to capitalize on interdisciplinary strengths and maximize research impact on the field of global health and population studies.
**ACTIVITIES**

**RECRUIT NEW FACULTY.** We will develop a faculty recruitment plan and timeline to address key areas that complement our existing faculty, and that enhance our academic and professional expertise.

**NUTURE AND RETAIN CURRENT FACULTY.** GHP has a strong and diverse pool of assistant and associate professors. Through senior faculty mentoring and targeted research and funding support, we will support efforts to prepare each for a successful tenure review.

**BUILD GHP POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAM.** Post-doctoral fellows not only represent the next generation of global health scholars but also offer the opportunity to leverage current faculty and bolster their own productivity. We will develop a funded postdoctoral program to support faculty and cross-departmental initiatives.

**INCORPORATE VISITING FACULTY AND ADJUNCT FACULTY.** We will identify and integrate visiting and adjunct faculty strategically to complement departmental research in key areas.

**DEVELOP INTRA AND INTER-DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH.** GHP’s three research clusters—Global Health Systems; Population & Family Health; and Humanitarian Studies, Ethics, and Human Rights—represent established areas of expertise in the department. We will draw further on these clusters to lead interdisciplinary, cross-departmental initiatives that promote innovation and entrepreneurship to advance solutions for global health challenges.
To address major and complex global health challenges by building upon existing partnerships to create and sustain global networks of engagement

In order to address major and complex global health challenges, we need to draw on the extensive talents and disciplines found across the University and continue to strengthen our partnerships across the globe. GHP maintains an active online presence and sponsors dozens of events each year, many with other Harvard groups; we host regular seminars to feature the work ongoing in the department, work-in-progress seminars for doctoral students, and special events to draw broader attention to key issues. The department’s flagship event is the annual spring State of Global Health Symposium, which draws an international audience to feature a critical issue in global health. We are now expanding this to a “Global Health Week” to include a broader range of topics and activities and to convene groups with global health interests across Harvard.

GHP is home to the School-wide Office of Global Partnerships, which helps support the current regional initiatives: the China Health Partnership, India Health Partnership, and Africa Health Partnership. GHP is also a key link to the Harvard-affiliated Africa Academy of Public Health based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and we are working with Harvard Global Support Services on registration in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. GHP is naturally positioned to lead the School’s efforts in establishing hubs of research globally.

GOALS

GOAL 1: Raise the profile and accelerate the impact of GHP’s research and programs.

GOAL 2: Leverage GHP efforts through partnerships and engagement with other Harvard departments and centers.

GOAL 3: Build field capacity to support research and training for GHP researchers and students.

GOAL 4: Catalyze and enhance synergies for GHP faculty in key regions and countries, including India, China, and Africa, and worldwide where critical mass exists.
ACTIVITIES

MAKE FULL USE OF ONLINE TOOLS. We will enhance current and emerging virtual platforms, such as the GHP web site, the Chair’s biannual newsletter, and social media outlets, to enhance the departmental footprint and to increase engagement with our alumni, students, and global partners.

SUPPORT FIELD RESEARCH. We will evaluate and advance options of supporting field research such as field offices, local partnerships, and existing infrastructure and share best practices to ensure faculty can conduct their research most efficiently.

INSTITUTIONALIZE GHP FLAGSHIP EVENTS. We will make the GHP State of Global Health Symposium a permanent yearly flagship event for the department and leverage our networks within Harvard and beyond to bring together the global health community.

LEVERAGE THE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS. GHP will use the existing Office of Global Partnerships to support the regional initiatives so that they are inclusive across the School and play a strategic role in convening and advancing research and education within and across regional boundaries.
Priority 4: Core resources

To sustain a vibrant research and education enterprise supported by robust core resources and administrative systems

GHP has experienced rapid growth over the past five years, doubling in size. The department spans five local office locations and has research and education collaborations in more than two dozen countries, has project staff members based permanently in the field, and includes nearly 300 faculty, students, staff, and fellows. To support current and projected growth in its vibrant research and education enterprise, GHP needs to continue to build sustainable and robust core resources and administrative systems. GHP administrative and project staff number nearly 100 individuals at varying stages in their own careers, and GHP research and programs benefit from these engaged and experienced staff members who are committed to excellence in their work. Core financial resources are also needed to support faculty initiatives and further research ideas, to launch a postdoctoral program, and to support student field work and scholarship for students from under-represented regions of the world.

GOALS

GOAL 1: Enhance GHP’s physical and administrative infrastructure.

GOAL 2: Advocate for increased Harvard Chan School and Harvard University investment in field research capacity.

GOAL 3: Maintain and enhance efforts to recruit and retain qualified, diverse staff.

GOAL 4: Build pool of GHP unrestricted and flexible funds available to support innovation and emergent priorities.
ACTIVITIES

INCREASE CONTIGUOUS SPACE AND EXPAND USE OF REMOTE WORK TECHNOLOGIES. GHP will continue to work with the School to identify opportunities to co-locate faculty and researchers. We will make increased use of BlueJeans, Lync, and other technologies to facilitate remote participation.

WORK CLOSELY WITH HARVARD GLOBAL RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES. As the needs and opportunities for GHP’s field research change over time, GHP staff and faculty will work closely with Harvard Global Support Services to advocate for resources and infrastructure needed to support that research.

PRIORITIZE STAFF ENGAGEMENT AND INVEST IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. We will continue to prioritize programs that support work-life balance and continued professional development to ensure GHP remains a great place to work.

PARTNER WITH OFFICE OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS TO DEVELOP PHILANTHROPY. To raise the core resources needed to support the faculty research, student recruitment, postdoctoral program, and flagship events, we will partner with the School’s Office of External Relations to develop a constituency of core supporters for the department and develop a GHP Council.
CONCLUSION

GHP is poised to implement exciting change in each of our four priority areas—Curriculum and Pedagogy; Creativity and Scholarship; Connectivity; and Core Resources—together as ONE GHP in a great school and a great university. By creating this strategic plan, GHP has placed teaching and research front and center for all departmental activity and has provided a blueprint for the next five years. Our strategic plan includes a selected set of activities from a longer list of envisioned contributions, and we will continue to actively track, evaluate, and prioritize these activities to ensure we are successful. To implement this plan, we will draw on our existing faculty and administrative committees, including our GHP Education Management Committee; our three research clusters, Global Health Systems; Humanitarian Studies, Ethics, and Human Rights; and Population and Family Health; and the Office of Global Partnerships. Each of these will guide the implementation, tracking, and evaluations of our various activities and associated metrics, and provide a process and a forum for our faculty and staff to regularly assess our progress and adjust priorities and timelines. We recognize that much may change in both the internal and external landscapes of global health during the course of implementing this strategic plan, but we hope our four priority areas act as the pillars that will support this change and remind all of the strength of our commitment to our vision: To be a world leader in advancing global health and population studies through outstanding research and distinctive education. In all of these pursuits, we are grateful for the support of the Dean’s Office at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and many partners across Harvard Chan, the University, and the globe.

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