

WHS Academic Alliance 2025 Review & Impact Report

World Health Summit Foundation GmbH



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1. About the WHS Academic Alliance

The WHS Academic Alliance (formerly M8 Alliance) is the academic network of the World Health Summit, bringing together 30 (as of 01.01.2026) leading academic institutions from all continents. Founded by Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin in 2009, the Alliance fosters international and trans-sectoral collaboration, connects the scientific community to inform global health agendas, and supports evidence-based health policy and practice. The WHS Academic Alliance actively shapes the World Health Summit program, but activities extend also beyond the Summit itself.

The International Presidency of the World Health Summit rotates annually among members of the WHS Academic Alliance. Each year, the presiding member institution also hosts the WHS Regional Meeting.

2. Strategic Objectives and Alignment

In 2025, the WHS Academic Alliance aligned its activities around a set of strategic objectives aimed at strengthening the Alliance's relevance, inclusiveness, and impact. Key priorities included deepening engagement between member institutions, increasing interaction between the secretariat and member institutions, initiating and continuing member-driven activities, and systematically gathering feedback to inform both current initiatives and future strategic development.

The Alliance secretariat and the Executive Committee continued their efforts to enhance fairness and transparency of processes, particularly with regard to membership and fee structures. Efforts to increase Alliance participation and visibility at the World Health Summit also continued.

In parallel, the Alliance also focused on fostering relevant partnerships and strengthening representation from the global majority among its members, reinforcing its commitment to equitable global engagement and representation.

3. Engagement at the World Health Summit (Berlin)

A key benefit of membership in the WHS Academic Alliance includes exclusive opportunities for participation at the annual World Health Summit. Each member is entitled to send five delegates to the Summit free of charge, and hotel costs are covered for up to three participants per institution. Other benefits at the Summit include, for example, access to the VIP Lounge.

As the academic backbone of the World Health Summit, the WHS Academic Alliance actively shapes the WHS program. Through its contribution, the Alliance underscores the importance of academic collaboration, scientific exchange, and evidence-based policymaking, while reinforcing its role in advancing science-based solutions to today's most pressing challenges and setting the agenda for global health at the World Health Summit and beyond.

3.1. Development of the Alliance track

The Alliance has always been key in shaping and participating in the World Health Summit Program, however without a formalized framework. The WHS Academic Alliance Track was initiated in December 2024 as a strategic step to formalize the Alliance’s role within the World Health Summit program. The Track was fully implemented throughout 2025, providing Alliance members with a dedicated and visible space to contribute academically driven, policy-relevant content to the WHS agenda.

For the 2025 cycle, the Alliance received 20 session proposals from member institutions, many of which reflected joint collaborations between multiple Academic Alliance institutions, highlighting the growing level of cross-institutional cooperation within the network. Following a structured review process conducted jointly by the Executive Committee (ExCo) and the WHS Program Team, 10 proposals were selected for inclusion in the Academic Alliance Track at the WHS 2025.

In addition to these sessions, an ExCo ad hoc session was incorporated into the Track to address urgent and emerging global health issues, ensuring responsiveness to current developments.

Overall, the Academic Alliance Track in 2025 demonstrated the Alliance’s increasing capacity to contribute high-quality, collaborative, and timely content to the World Health Summit program. Yet a need for small revisions in the process also proved necessary (see point 4.3).

3.2. Program Engagement at WHS 2025

The following section summarizes all sessions co-hosted by the WHS Academic Alliance and its Executive Committee at the World Health Summit 2025, covering a chronological list of sessions, speakers and estimated in-person/online attendance. Information is based on WHS official releases and public data as of late 2025, supplemented by internal counts from attendee tracking and streaming analytics.

<p>Global Health Lab 04 – Operationalizing the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Co-Host:</i> Charité Competence Center for Traditional and Integrative Medicine (CCCTIM)• <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Hiba Boujnah, Gilbert Motlalepula Matsabisa, Nessma El-Nabawy, Nicole Redvers, Shyama Kuruvilla, Abderrazak Bouzouita• <i>Funding:</i> Fully funded by WHO/Center for Traditional and Integrative Medicine.
<p>Workshop 03 – Precision Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Co-Hosts:</i> Karolinska Institute, Makerere University• <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Stefan Swartling Peterson, Ricardo Baptista Leite, Githinji Gitahi, Rhoda Wanyenze, Pascale Allotey, Elisabete Weiderpass• <i>Funding:</i> Private sector partners made a last minute decision to be involved in other sessions of the program instead
<p>Workshop 05 – Empowering the Global Health Workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Co-Host:</i> Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Bart Janssens, Laura Magaña, Rasmus Møgelvang, Olive Tengera, Amelia Latu Afuhaamango Tuipulotu, Heyo Kroemer
<p>Global Health Lab 04 – Operationalizing the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Host:</i> Charité Competence Center for Traditional and Integrative Medicine (CCCTIM) • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Hiba Boujnah, Gilbert Motlalepula Matsabisa, Nessma El-Nabawy, Nicole Redvers, Shyama Kuruvilla, Abderrazak Bouzouita • <i>Funding:</i> Fully funded by WHO/Center for Traditional and Integrative Medicine.
<p>Workshop 03 – Precision Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Hosts:</i> Karolinska Institute, Makerere University • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Stefan Swartling Peterson, Ricardo Baptista Leite, Githinji Gitahi, Rhoda Wanyenze, Pascale Allotey, Elisabete Weiderpass • <i>Funding:</i> Funding was expected from the private sector; yet private sector partners made a last minute decision to be involved in other sessions of the program instead
<p>Workshop 05 – Empowering the Global Health Workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Host:</i> Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Bart Janssens, Laura Magaña, Rasmus Møgelvang, Olive Tengera, Amelia Latu Afuhaamango Tuipulotu, Heyo Kroemer • <i>Funding:</i> No funding was found.
<p>Workshop 03 – Precision Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Hosts:</i> Karolinska Institute, Makerere University • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Stefan Swartling Peterson, Ricardo Baptista Leite, Githinji Gitahi, Rhoda Wanyenze, Pascale Allotey, Elisabete Weiderpass • <i>Funding:</i> Funding was expected from the private sector; Bayer/Pfizer both declined at the last minute
<p>Global Health Lab 09 – Interdisciplinary Action to Combat Global Gun Violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Hosts:</i> George Washington University, Milken Institute School of Public Health • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Adnan A. Hyder, Michele Gonçalves dos Ramos, Adèle Kirsten, Lorena Barberia, Pamela Das • <i>Funding:</i> No funding was found.
<p>Global Health Lab 14 – Conflict, Militarism and Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Host:</i> London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Andrew Haines, Elsara Badri, Carlos Umaña, Neta C. Crawford, Neil Arya • <i>Funding:</i> No funding was found.
<p>Workshop 14 – Pandemic Preparedness Through Global Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Host:</i> University of Hong Kong • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Jakob Cramer, Leo Lit-man Poon, Frank Konings, Rebecca Grais, Maria Van Kerkhove, Mosoka Fallah • <i>Funding:</i> Funding through the Hong Kong Jockey Club's Institute of Philanthropy
<p>Panel Discussion 18 – Peace and Sustainable Health Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Host:</i> Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Amirhossein Takian, Petra Khoury, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Kumanan Rasanathan, Elsara Badri, Parnian Parvanta

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Funding:</i> No funding was found.
<p>Global Health Lab 16 – Strengthening Quality of Medicines in Sub-Saharan Africa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Hosts:</i> Paris Global Health Institute – Université Paris Cité, National University of Singapore (NUS) • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Xavier Jouven, Bruk Alemayehu, Yik-Ying Teo, Marie Antignacm, Rutendo Kuwana • <i>Funding:</i> We were expecting funding from the private sector, but it did not materialize.
<p>Workshop 18 – Navigating the Challenge of Health and Aging in the Global South</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Host:</i> Aga Khan University • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Anthony K. Ngugi, Alexandre Kalache, Muthoni Gichu, Erwin Tan, Jinkook Lee • <i>Funding:</i> Aga Khan University had found a private sector funder, but this did not work out in the end.
<p>Panel Discussion 23 – Climate in Crisis, Health at Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Host:</i> London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Joy Phumaphi, Andrew Haines, Victor J. Dzau, Elizabeth Kimani-Murage, Ethel Maciel, Vincent Bretin, Carsten Schneider • <i>Funding:</i> No direct funder, but this was part of the fulfillment of an existing grant the WHS Foundation GmbH has with the Wellcome Trust.
<p>Panel Discussion 25 – Confronting Disinformation in the Global Anti-Vaccine Discourse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-Host:</i> WHS Academic Alliance Executive Committee • <i>Chairs/Speakers:</i> Yik Ying Teo, Mohamed Yakub Janabi, Heidi Larson, Benjamin Schreiber, Karla Soares-Weiser • <i>Funding:</i> Since this was the ExCo Session that was put in the program at a late stage, we were unable to find funding, however, this was accounted for in the budgetary planning by the WHS Foundation GmbH

In total, the Academic Alliance and Executive Committee co-hosted 11 sessions, comprising 4 Workshops (WS), 4 Global Health Labs (GHL), and 3 Panel Discussions (PD), reflecting a diverse range of formats within their program contributions.

Speakers by WHS Academic Alliance Member Institutions at WHS 2025:

Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin	Heyo Kroemer Hiba Boujnah Beate Kampmann Samuel Knauss Christian Drosten Julius Emrich
Karolinska Institutet	Stefan Swartling Peterson
Makerere University	Rhoda Wanyenze
George Washington University / Boston University School of Public Health	Adnan A. Hyder (also ExCo member) Lawrence O. Gostin
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)	Andrew Haines Peter Piot Kris Murray Heidi Larson

University of Hong Kong (HKUMed)	Leo Lit-man Poon
Aga Khan University	Anthony K. Ngugi Rosebella Iseme (Opening Night) Lukoye Atwoli (Opening Night) Zulfiqar A. Bhutta
Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS)	Amirhossein Takian (also ExCo member)
National University of Singapore (NUS)	Yik Ying Teo (also ExCo member) Jason Lee
Université Paris Cité	Xavier Jouven

3.3 Flagship Initiative – the Coimbra Satellite Event to WHS 2025

The WHS Academic Alliance was honored to welcome a flagship member-led satellite event in conjunction with the World Health Summit 2025 in Berlin, hosted by Coimbra Health. The event extended the reach of the Summit by live-streaming selected WHS sessions to the Coimbra campus, complemented by locally relevant programming and an exclusive live-streamed panel discussion. The panel connected Coimbra directly with Berlin and featured Portuguese Minister of Health Ana Paula Martins, WHS President Prof. Dr. Axel R. Pries, Carlos Robalo Cordeiro, and Luis de Almeida Sampaio, demonstrating the Alliance’s ability to link global dialogue with national and institutional leadership.

The Coimbra Satellite Event highlighted the potential of hybrid and decentralized engagement formats to broaden participation beyond the Summit venue. Key success factors included dedicated local hosting and technical infrastructure, additional contextualized programming beyond live-streamed sessions, and active two-way interaction, such as in the virtual Q&A with high-level speakers. Strong advance communication, clearly defined target audiences, and coordination with WHS colleagues in Berlin ensured alignment in content and visuals and contributed to the event’s visibility and impact.

3.4 Participation at WHS 2025

A total of 82 Alliance members (not counting speakers) attended the World Health Summit 2025 in-person, and over 60 of those also attended the Alliance Assembly and its related workshops.

4.4. New mechanisms for involvement in 2026

Following the World Health Summit 2025, the Academic Alliance Track was reviewed and refined based on feedback from the WHS Program team, WHS leadership, WHS Academic Alliance Strategy Workshop, and Assembly. A key outcome of these discussions was the shared ambition for the Alliance to play a more active, transparent, and structured role in shaping the WHS program. In response, the WHS Program Team, in close coordination with the

Executive Committee, introduced an updated process for the WHS 2026 Academic Alliance Track.

The refined process contains a Program Survey for Academic Alliance members, aimed at capturing members' perspectives on overarching WHS key themes, emerging global health challenges, innovations, and priority policy directions for 2026. The survey enables the Program Team to better reflect Alliance priorities in strategic planning. Once analyzed, results are shared with Alliance members alongside insights from participant and speaker surveys, providing a comprehensive overview of stakeholder perspectives.

For WHS 2026, the Academic Alliance Track will again comprise approximately 10 WHS sessions exclusively reserved for Alliance members. Session proposals will be reviewed jointly by the WHS Program Department and the Executive Committee to ensure alignment with the WHS 2026 key themes and program structure. Each institution may submit up to two proposals, which are evaluated based on clearly defined criteria, including thematic relevance, diversity of speakers, collaboration across Alliance members, innovative session formats, and funding readiness.

The post-selection process has also been clearly structured: following the submission deadline, proposals are reviewed and assessed with a pre-set points system by the Program Team and ExCo during a dedicated meeting. Results are communicated to the Alliance in March, after which selected session co-hosts work closely with the Program Team to refine session concepts. From May onward, the WHS team provides continuous support through speaker coordination, logistics, and quality assurance until the Summit in October. One key focus for 2026 will be to find suitable sponsors for each Alliance session.

This refined approach strengthens the strategic influence, transparency, and impact of the WHS Academic Alliance, ensuring meaningful member engagement in co-designing the World Health Summit agenda for 2026 and beyond.

5. WHS Regional Meeting

The WHS Academic Alliance played a central role in the World Health Summit Regional Meeting 2025, held from April 25–27 in New Delhi. The meeting was hosted by NIMS University, a WHS Academic Alliance member, with co-hosts Ashoka University and MAHE, marking a landmark event as the first WHS Regional Meeting in India. The gathering brought together over 5,000 participants from 54 countries, featuring more than 160 sessions and 950 speakers.

As a key contributor, the WHS Academic Alliance:

- Co-led sessions and expert discussions, shaping the agenda around health equity, innovation, and regional collaboration. In more than 160 sessions held, topics were guided by the RM central topics:
 - Digital Health and AI Future
 - Future of Health
 - Health diplomacy and Cooperation
 - Climate Change and Planetary Health
 - Innovation and Leadership
 - Health and Peace
 - Communication & Health Care

- Women and Children Health
- Facilitated knowledge exchange, translating research and evidence into actionable recommendations for policymakers and practitioners.
- Strengthened networks and partnerships, connecting global health leaders with regional stakeholders and academic institutions.
- Elevated visibility, showcasing the Alliance's thought leadership on a prominent international platform.

Impact of the meeting:

- Advanced strategic pathways for regional health cooperation, particularly across India and South-East Asia.
- Generated actionable insights for integrating health priorities into multilateral forums such as G20, ASEAN, and BRICS.
- Provided momentum for future initiatives, including upcoming Expert Meetings and the WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit in December 2025.

The full look-back report can be read [here](#).

Furthermore, the preparations for the Regional Meeting 2026 in Nairobi, Kenya commenced. During the Opening Ceremony at WHS 2025, the baton and international presidency hand-over from NIMS University to Aga Khan University took place.

Additionally, in 2025, the hosts for the WHS Regional Meetings in 2027 and 2028 were formally chosen by the WHS Academic Alliance. The University of Hong Kong (HKU) were confirmed as hosts for the WHS Regional Meeting 2027 in Hong Kong, while Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (ENSP Fiocruz) was selected to host the WHS Regional Meeting 2028 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

6. Activities, Meetings and Publications

In 2025, the WHS Academic Alliance Assembly convened twice in person, each time bringing together more than 60 senior leaders, including deans, rectors, vice deans, and other academic executives, from member institutions. The meetings took place during the WHS Regional Meeting in New Delhi on April 25 and the World Health Summit in Berlin on 10 October. These in-person (with online participation) assemblies provided a dedicated forum to discuss the strategic direction, key activities, and priorities of the Academic Alliance, as well as to reflect on progress and shape the year ahead.

6.1 In-person workshops

During the Assembly Day at the World Health Summit in Berlin, a new and participatory meeting structure was introduced. Following the plenary Assembly, members engaged in three parallel, member-led workshops. These focused on (1) the strategic direction and future development of the WHS Academic Alliance, (2) health workforce development, including discussion of a potential Alliance-wide project, and (3) the kick-off meeting for the Maternal and Child Health Working Group. This format strengthened member engagement, encouraged collaborative

agenda-setting, and enabled more in-depth, action-oriented discussions aligned with members' priorities.

Key outcomes from each workshop:

1. Strategy of the Alliance

The Strategy workshop highlighted a vision for the network which emphasized outcomes centered on advocacy, policy influence, and academic excellence. Participants underscored the Alliance's commitment to safeguarding academic freedom, upholding multilateralism, promoting rigor and integrity, tackling dis- and misinformation, communicating evidence, fostering learning systems, engaging multiple sectors, supporting sustainability, and strengthening democracy. What sets the WHS Academic Alliance apart is its role as a "one-stop center" for influencing policy, positioning advocacy as its primary focus over traditional research collaboration. Key goals for the next 2–5 years should include strategic interactions with policy- and decision-makers, expanding global health education through joint courses, summer schools, and traveling master's programs, targeted member recruitment in underrepresented regions, synthesizing insights from WHS sessions for publication, and actively shaping the central themes of WHS events to ensure the Alliance remains deeply connected and influential within the global academic and policy landscape.

2. Health Workforce Development

The workshop concluded that health systems globally are evolving rapidly and must adapt to emerging technologies, changing population needs, and persistent structural inefficiencies, underscoring the urgent need for stronger international collaboration to collectively rethink solutions. Participants stressed that future action must be coordinated, data-informed, and locally relevant. In workforce development, major challenges identified included insufficient and fragmented data, widespread retention issues, gaps in medical education, inefficient funding structures, and poor alignment between Ministries of Health and Education. As next steps, participants agreed on the importance of clarifying how the proposed activities align with the WHS Academic Alliance and determining whether the initiative should be advanced under AAHCI or the Alliance framework, in accordance with working group regulations.

3. Maternal and Child Health Working Group Kick-off

This workshop functioned as the first meeting of the WHS Academic Alliance Working Group on Maternal and Child Health (see 6.2). The group agreed to move into the implementation phase by engaging key government stakeholders and developing a detailed budget framework alongside a structured stakeholder consultation plan. A multi-stakeholder consultation will be convened in India, bringing together government representatives, development partners, academia, and civil society to ensure broad ownership and alignment. Discussions will focus on strengthening early childhood development approaches and addressing childhood non-communicable diseases, with the goal of building a strong foundation for improving young children's health outcomes. The group aims to finalize the budget and comprehensive activity plan within two months to enable a coordinated and timely program roll-out.

6.2. Working Groups

The development of WHS Academic Alliance Working Groups began as a conceptual initiative in 2024 and was formally consolidated in 2025. During the WHS Regional Meeting 2025, the idea for the first Alliance Working Group was cemented, marking an important step toward increasing structured, member-driven collaboration. Building on this momentum, the Executive Committee (ExCo) developed and approved formal guidelines for the creation, governance, and operation of Working Groups. Since then, multiple Working Groups have been formally approved, with additional groups currently under development.

Each Working Group is led by a minimum of three Academic Alliance member institutions and is open to researchers across all Alliance institutions, fostering inclusive, cross-institutional collaboration. The Working Groups are designed to advance thematic exchange, joint research initiatives, policy-relevant outputs, and coordinated contributions to the World Health Summit process, while remaining strongly anchored in member expertise and leadership.

As of the March 2026, the following Working Groups have been established:

Working Group Topic	Lead Institution(s)	Status
Maternal and Child Health	NIMS University	Approved by ExCo; active since October 2025
Oral & General Health	Sapienza University	Approved by ExCo; active since December 2025
Health & Science Diplomacy	American University of Beirut	Approved by ExCo; active since January 2026

6.3. Research and Publications

In 2025, the WHS Academic Alliance advanced joint research and scholarly collaboration through high-profile, multi-institutional publications that reflect the Alliance's core values and its contribution to global health policy and practice.

A central output was the publication of the official WHS Academic Alliance Declaration, developed collaboratively by members of the Alliance. The Declaration highlights the critical importance of free science and strong global partnerships in achieving worldwide health goals. It articulates three key priorities:

- defining, respecting, and safeguarding academic freedom,
- strengthening international collaboration and multilateral institutions, and
- combating misinformation and rebuilding trust in science.

The Declaration was authored by the Executive Committee, supported by external Alliance members. Authors included Lukoye Atwoli (Medical College East Africa & Aga Khan University, Kenya), Daniela De Biase (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy), Axel R. Pries, (World Health Summit, Germany), Adnan A. Hyder (Boston University, USA), Chak-Sing Lau (University of Hong Kong, China), Damalie Nakanjako (Makerere University, Uganda), Stefan Swartling Peterson (Karolinska Institutet, Sweden), Luis de Almeida Sampaio (University of Coimbra, Portugal), Amirhossein Takian (Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran), Yik-Ying Teo (National

University of Singapore), Balvir S. Tomar (NIMS University, India), Feyza Nur Tuncer (Istanbul University, Turkey), and Sophia Zoungas. The writing process was also supported by Marinus Fislage and Linda Sebbas at the WHS Secretariat. The Declaration was thereafter approved by all members and stands as a collective statement of the Alliance’s commitment to academic freedom, multilateralism, and evidence-based decision-making. It was successfully [published in Nature Medicine](#).

In addition, two joint publications on migrant and refugee health were released in 2025 as part of an Academic Alliance initiative led by Prof. Luciano Saso (Sapienza University of Rome). These publications address the opportunities, risks, and governance challenges associated with digital and technological approaches in migrant and refugee health.

The first publication, “[Artificial Intelligence in Migrant Health: A Critical Perspective on Opportunities and Risks](#),” was authored by Stephen A. Matlin, Iona M. M. Claron, Jessica Merone, Gina Netto, Amirhossein Takian, Muhammad Hamid Zaman, and Luciano Saso. The paper critically examines the application of artificial intelligence in migrant health, highlighting both its transformative potential and the ethical, legal, and equity-related risks associated with its use.

The second publication, “[Digital Solutions for Migrant and Refugee Health: A Framework for Analysis and Action](#),” was authored by Stephen A. Matlin, Johanna Hanefeld, Ana Corte-Real, Paulo Rupino da Cunha, Thea de Gruchy, Karima Noorali Manji, Gina Netto, Tiago Nunes, İlke Şanlıer, Amirhossein Takian, Muhammad Hamid Zaman, and Luciano Saso. This paper proposes a structured framework to guide analysis, policy development, and implementation of digital health solutions for migrant and refugee populations.

Together, these outputs demonstrate the WHS Academic Alliance’s growing role as a platform for coordinated, multi-institutional research, supporting responsible innovation, policy-relevant scholarship, and global dialogue on complex health challenges.

6.3.1. WHS Academic Alliance - Lancet Commission on Academic Responsibility

In 2024, the idea of a joint WHS Academic Alliance and Lancet Commission on Academic Responsibility grew. In 2025, the steering committee selected nominations for and invited 28 commissioners to join the project. Throughout the year, search for funding was undertaken, as well as planning for the first kick-off meeting and official launch of the commission, which will take place in February 2026, hosted by Manipal Academy for Higher Education (MAHE) in Dubai.

7. Membership Development

7.1 New members

In January 2025, the WHS Academic Alliance welcomed two new member institutions, further strengthening the Alliance’s academic breadth and regional representation. The National School of Public Health Sergio Arouca (ENSP), a unit of Fiocruz, joined the Alliance, contributing strong expertise in health workforce training, public health research, and service

delivery. ENSP plays a central role in strengthening Brazil's health system and collaborates extensively with national and international partners to advance public health innovation and policy development.

Also joining in January 2025, Ashoka University expanded the Alliance's interdisciplinary profile. Ashoka University offers programs across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, with a strong emphasis on research, experiential learning, and international faculty engagement. In 2025, Ashoka University also served as a co-host of the WHS Regional Meeting, underscoring its active role within the World Health Summit network.

In addition, Peking University's Global Health and Development Institute (PKU-GHDI) and the United Nations University International Institute for Global Health (UNU-IIGH) were approved for membership by the Executive Committee in 2025. Both institutions formally join the WHS Academic Alliance in January 2026, with UNU-IIGH rejoining the Alliance. Their inclusion further enhances the Alliance's global reach with representation in Asia, and strengthens expertise in global health governance, development, and policy-oriented research.

7.2 Changes in the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (ExCo) serves as the strategic and governance body of the WHS Academic Alliance, providing oversight, guidance, and decision-making on key initiatives, programs, and policies. The ExCo works closely with the WHS Program Team and member institutions to shape the Alliance's priorities, approve new initiatives, and ensure alignment with its mission and long-term goals.

In 2025, the ExCo underwent several important changes and formal updates. The Alliance's statutes were revised (in 2024) to clarify and formalize the composition of the ExCo, including clear rules regarding term limits for members and international presidents. The changes were implemented across 2024-2025. This system was designed to ensure regular membership renewal while maintaining continuity in governance. As part of this process, additional members were elected with a specific focus on increasing gender balance and enhancing geographical diversity within the leadership team. The ExCo maintained a regular meeting rhythm throughout 2025, convening once a month virtually, with an additional in-person meeting during the World Health Summit 2025.

We also formally acknowledged the contributions of outgoing ExCo members, including Adnan Hyder and Sophia Zoungas, who transitioned to new roles outside the ExCo. Their guidance and dedication were recognized as instrumental in supporting the growth and development of the Alliance.

These updates to the ExCo structure, membership, and meeting practices not only strengthen governance and strategic oversight but also create a more dynamic and inclusive leadership model, ensuring that the WHS Academic Alliance continues to evolve in line with its vision and the needs of its member institutions.

7.3. POLYAS Digital Voting in 2025

In 2025, the WHS Academic Alliance continued to utilize POLYAS digital voting, a secure platform enabling one designated voting representative per member institution to participate in decision-making on behalf of their organization. POLYAS ensures transparency, efficiency, and broad participation for Alliance governance, allowing members to approve or decide on key initiatives, leadership positions, and strategic directions.

Throughout the year, several important votes were conducted via POLYAS:

- New WHS Academic Alliance Members (January 2025) – The vote achieved a 52% turnout, with the decision approved, formally welcoming new members into the Alliance.
- New Executive Committee Members (Spring 2025) – Initial voter turnout was 40%. To reach a majority, additional votes were collected via email, and the decision was ultimately approved.
- Regional Meeting Host 2027 – The vote recorded a 68% turnout, and the decision was approved, confirming the designated host institution.
- New WHS Academic Alliance Members (September 2025) – The vote achieved a 64% turnout, with the decision approved, further expanding the Alliance’s membership base.

Overall, POLYAS provided a reliable and inclusive mechanism for Alliance members to participate in governance, ensuring legitimacy and accountability in all key institutional and strategic decisions. The platform contributed to strengthening member engagement and the transparency of the Alliance’s decision-making processes throughout 2025.

8. Student Engagement

8.1. Young Leaders in Global Health Award

The Young Leaders in Global Health Award was initiated by NIMS university, in connection with the 2025 Regional Meeting. The award recognized emerging leaders making impactful contributions to global health in academia. Each WHS Academic Alliance member institution was invited to nominate candidates. Five outstanding individuals were awarded travel grants to attend the WHS Regional Meeting in New Delhi, hosted by NIMS University. Due to visa difficulties, two of the nominees were not able to attend the Regional Meeting in person.

Congratulations went to:

- Afifah Rahman-Shepherd, nominated by the National University of Singapore
- Antonia Morita Saktiawati, nominated by the InterAcademy Partnership
- Rosebella Iseme-Ondiek, nominated by Aga Khan University
- Valentina Baccolini, nominated by the Sapienza University of Rome
- Lai Francisco Tsz Tsun, nominated by Hong Kong University

8.2. Global Voices Fellowships

As part of the WHS Academic Alliance, Coimbra Health launched the Global Voices Fellowships to support the participation of young clinicians and medical students from Portuguese-speaking countries (CPLP) in the World Health Summit 2025. In line with the WHS 2025 leitmotif “Taking Responsibility for Health in a Fragmenting World”, the program strengthens the presence of young professionals from underrepresented regions in global health discussions.

The fellowships were coordinated in collaboration with medical schools in CPLP countries. Each selected fellow received up to €3,000 to cover travel and accommodation costs. Three fellows were awarded the grant and successfully attended the WHS 2025 in Berlin!

- Angola: Antonino de Jesus da Silva Francisco, Universidade Agostinho Neto
- Cabo-Verde: Miriam Mascarenhas Monteiro Fortes, Universidade de Cabo Verde (Uni-CV)
- Mozambique: Vivian Maria De Vasconcelos, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane – UEM

8.3. Best Thesis Prize

In December 2025, Roma Sapienza Foundation launched the Call for Nomination for the Best Thesis Prize. The prize is a long-standing initiative in the Alliance, issued every second year. With the prize, Sapienza Foundation is awarding a €5,000 prize for the best specialization or doctoral thesis in Health Sciences, with a focus on global health. Nominations for the prize are only open for students within WHS Academic Alliance member institutions. The winner will be selected in 2026 and announced at WHS 2026.

9. Communication, Outreach, and Visibility

In 2025, the WHS website underwent a comprehensive redesign, resulting in the launch of a fully restructured Academic Alliance subsite. The new subsite was developed to optimize information delivery for both public audiences and Alliance members, improving clarity, accessibility, and user experience. Further development of the Academic Alliance subsite is ongoing, with the aim of expanding member-specific content and functionality.

The WHS Academic Alliance website recorded approximately 2,200 unique page views per month, indicating stable and targeted interest in the Alliance’s work. Users primarily accessed information related to activities, publications, and the role of the Academic Alliance within the World Health Summit, underscoring the website’s function as a central information platform for academic partners and external stakeholders.

Throughout 2025, the WHS Academic Alliance was mentioned in 204 media articles, achieving a cumulative potential reach of approximately 294.8 million. Media coverage was largely driven by the WHS Regional Meeting, with the highest concentration of articles published in India, the United States, Kenya, Australia, and Bahrain.

While social media performance of Academic Alliance posts cannot be evaluated separately from the World Health Summit media itself, content published between April 11 and May 9, 2025 focused primarily on the Regional Meeting. During this period, the World Health Summit social media community grew to 133,010 followers across channels (+76.5%). Total impressions reached 13,810 (-18.8%), while interactions increased to 151 (+55.7%), indicating stronger engagement quality despite a lower overall reach. The most successful content related to the WHS Regional Meeting New Delhi 2025, leadership statements, and event highlights.

To further strengthen strategic communications, new communications colleagues with a dedicated focus on the WHS Academic Alliance joined the team in 2025. They initiated monthly coordination calls with communications contacts across Alliance member institutions, creating a structured platform for exchange. These calls are open to all communications colleagues at member institutions and aim to facilitate the sharing of relevant updates, best practices, and content ideas for amplification across social media, the WHS website, and other communication channels.

In addition, the WHS Academic Alliance Info & Activities letter was launched in 2025. The newsletter is targeted at Alliance members and the wider communities within member institutions, including students, faculty, and staff. It serves as a dedicated channel to highlight Alliance activities, publications, events, and opportunities for engagement, thereby strengthening internal connectivity and visibility across the network. Members, faculty and students at member institutions can sign up for the newsletter [here](#).

10. Feedback and development

10.1 Presidential Round

In 2025, the WHS Academic Alliance introduced the Presidential Round as a new high-level engagement format designed to strengthen direct dialogue between WHS leadership and the leadership of Alliance member institutions. The initiative aimed to demonstrate appreciation for member institutions, deepen engagement, and foster a shared understanding of the value, activities, and strategic direction of the WHS Academic Alliance, while encouraging sustained institutional leadership support for membership.

The Presidential Rounds provided a semi-formal setting, combining open discussion with a limited number of structured follow-up items. This format proved particularly effective in facilitating candid exchange. Initial responses from members were highly positive, with participants expressing appreciation for the initiative. Several institutions involved senior university and university hospital leadership, reflecting strong institutional interest and commitment.

The discussions generated valuable feedback on the current state and future development of the Alliance. Members highlighted the significant increase in engagement and activities over the past year, which was viewed very positively. At the same time, participants emphasized the need for the Alliance to evolve in a more bottom-up manner, enabling stronger involvement of researchers and faculty. There was also a clear call for enhanced networking and cross-institutional collaboration, both during the World Health Summit and throughout the year.

Further feedback pointed to structural and strategic considerations. Some members noted challenges in justifying the membership fee at institutional leadership level, underlining the importance of demonstrating clear value and impact. Several participants expressed the need for a clearly articulated and robust Alliance strategy, including defined short- and long-term goals, priority focus areas, and a stronger connection between global health discussions and locally relevant outcomes, extending beyond the Summit itself.

In addition to strategic feedback, the Presidential Rounds served as a platform for sharing information on ongoing activities, focus areas, partners, and projects across member institutions. The exchanges generated concrete ideas and outcomes, including the initiation of multiple Working Groups, new member-driven initiatives such as the Coimbra Satellite WHS event, and the development of workshop sessions linked to the Alliance Assembly. These discussions also informed the introduction of a new Executive Committee segment and the planning of a dedicated strategy workshop on October 11, 2025, focused on defining the future direction of the WHS Academic Alliance.

Overall, the Presidential Round proved to be a valuable instrument for strategic dialogue, trust-building, and agenda-setting, strengthening high-level institutional engagement and contributing directly to the further development of the WHS Academic Alliance. The format will continue in the future.

10.2 Engagement Round

The WHS Academic Alliance Secretariat also launched the Engagement Round, an initiative aimed at strengthening connections with member institutions and developing more inclusive and operational-level engagement formats. Complementing the ongoing Presidential Round, which engages senior institutional leadership, the Engagement Round focused on focal points, delegation members, and coordinators. Its purpose was to gather actionable feedback, identify institutional needs, and communicate opportunities for participation in Alliance activities, WHS programs, and collaborative initiatives.

The Engagement Round meetings served multiple purposes:

- Sharing information on ongoing Alliance initiatives, focus areas, and collaborative opportunities.
- Introducing new members to the Alliance, including its structure, benefits, and engagement pathways.
- Collecting feedback on the Alliance's priorities, strategy, and the value it provides to members.
- Facilitating operational engagement in Alliance projects, communications, and WHS program activities.
- Identifying potential topics for Working Groups and collaborative projects across institutions.

A central focus of the Engagement Round was communications and participation opportunities, including engagement in the Alliance Track at WHS, monthly communications calls, and involvement in Alliance-led newsletters, workshops, and youth-focused programs. Members

were encouraged to contribute ideas for collaborative initiatives, identify areas for cross-institutional engagement, and provide feedback to strengthen the Alliance's strategic direction.

The Engagement Round also highlighted priorities for the Alliance moving forward, including:

- Defining a clear strategy and value proposition for member institutions.
- Strengthening cross-institutional collaboration, including mapping ongoing partnerships and sharing resources.
- Increasing student and early-career researcher involvement through youth-led sessions, educational content at WHS and Regional Meetings, and targeted capacity-building opportunities.
- Enhancing operational-level awareness of the Alliance's activities, benefits, and pathways for engagement.
- Supporting the development of Working Groups in priority areas such as health diplomacy, maternal and child health, oral and general health, workforce development, and policy/best practice sharing.
- Leveraging the WHS platform for advocacy and visibility, connecting academic institutions with policy discussions and local, national, and global stakeholders.

Key outcomes of the Engagement Round included:

- Initial proposals and initiation of multiple Working Groups, allowing members to participate directly in shaping Alliance projects.
- Generation of new member-driven initiatives, such as satellite events linked to WHS activities.
- Development of workshops and session proposals aligned with the Alliance Assembly and WHS program priorities.
- Strengthened understanding of member priorities and institutional needs to inform future Alliance strategy and operational planning.
- Greater engagement of communications and academic staff, providing clear guidance on channels for involvement and contribution to Alliance initiatives.

Overall, the Engagement Round proved to be an effective operational-level mechanism for dialogue, collaboration, and strategic input. It complemented the high-level Presidential Round by deepening institutional understanding of the Alliance and generating tangible outputs that shaped both Alliance projects and WHS planning.

10.3 Feedback survey on WHS 2025 experience

Following the World Health Summit 2025 in Berlin, the WHS Academic Alliance Secretariat conducted a short survey in the Alliance to capture member experiences specifically related to the Summit. While the survey received a limited response rate (8 replies out of 80 recipients), the feedback highlighted several key strengths: interactive sessions and workshops were described as particularly engaging, the hotel arrangements were appreciated, and the Alliance Track was recognized as a valuable platform for visibility and active participation in Summit programming. Points for improvement included the need to further develop forums of

interaction for the Alliance, to provide better networking and strategic collaboration opportunities.

11. Global Impact via the WHS 2025

The WHS Academic Alliance is inherently connected to the World Health Summit. In October, the WHS 2025 brought the global health community together in Berlin at a time of increasing fragmentation and uncertainty. With more than 4,000 participants, over 400 speakers, and representation from 144 countries, the Summit once again demonstrated the convening power of dialogue across sectors, regions, and disciplines.

Beyond its scale, World Health Summit 2025 generated tangible outcomes. New cross-sector partnerships were initiated, commitments were made to strengthen health systems and advance health equity, and evidence and data were shared to inform policy and practice. Several initiatives and collaborations emerged directly from Summit sessions and dialogues, reinforcing the World Health Summit's role as a platform for cooperation, action, and measurable impact.

Main outcomes of WHS 2025:

- Global Burden of disease 2023 study Launch
- State of the world's emotional health 2025 Launch
- Global Preparedness and Monitoring Board 2025 Report Launch
- UNFPA global initiatives launch of the women's health index
- Pledges: 1 billion from Germany to the Global Fund to Combat AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; 8 million EU grant to fund a new joint digital initiative with WHO, to advance health systems transformation across Sub-Saharan Africa; 100 million euro from Germany to CEPI to accelerate vaccine development and strengthen pandemic preparedness

The full World Health Summit 2025 Impact Report can be read [here](#).

12. Key Achievements and Outcomes

- Launched 3 approved working groups with 6 more in development
- Hosted 3 in-person workshops
- Largest regional meeting in history of the WHS Academic Alliance was hosted
- Secured approval for two Expert Meetings in 2026, and confirmed Regional Meeting hosts for 2027 and 2028
- Brought youth to the Regional Meeting and WHS 2025 via two stipend programs
- Hosting of the first WHS-Coimbra Satellite Event
- Introduced the Alliance newsletter and boosted visibility across media channels
- Co-hosted 11 sessions at the World Health Summit, elevating global engagement and advocacy
- Published 3 Alliance papers in Journals, including the WHS Academic Alliance Declaration

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