

The Partnership for International Politics and Diplomacy for Health

HALF YEAR REPORT 2026



CENTER FOR
RESILIENT HEALTH



**Partnership for International Politics
and Diplomacy for Health**



**Karolinska
Institutet**

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Summary

Global health is continuously shaped by geopolitical tensions, economic constraints, complex governance structures, and changing priorities. Advancing global health therefore depends upon a better understanding of the interplay between health and politics, as well as improved capacity to navigate political processes of relevance to health.

During the first half of 2026, the Partnership for International Politics and Diplomacy for Health contributed to this by strengthening its role as a platform for analysis, convening, and leadership development in health diplomacy.

Key achievements:

- Delivered the 3rd Executive Programme to 33 participants from government, academia, civil society and the private sector. The total fellows who have now been enrolled are now 85.
- This year's fellows joined a growing international network, currently comprising 130 health diplomacy professionals (fellows and faculty), a Community of Health Diplomacy Practitioners.
- Regular advice to and dialogue with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Participation in the High-Level Panel establish by the Accra Reset process under the leadership of HE President Mahama.
- Six publications, four Insights papers, six policy briefs and seven reports on global health reform.
- Five online round table discussions and three in person events. Three thematic discussions with Nordic colleagues.
- 250 000 impressions on LinkedIn posts.
- More than 14 000 visitors to our website.

Together, these efforts add to the global discussion and strengthen global capacity to manage health challenges in an increasingly complex geopolitical context.



3rd Executive Program for Emerging Leaders

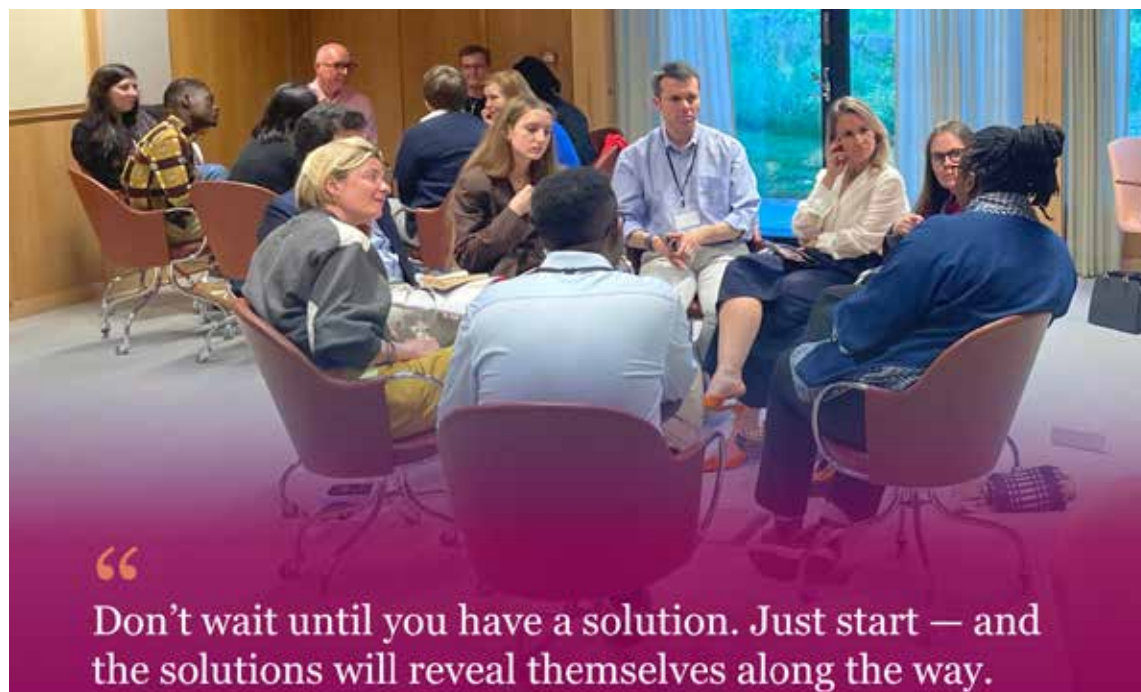
The 'International Politics and Diplomacy for Health' Executive Programme was delivered for the third time, bringing together 33 emerging leaders from across sectors and regions. The programme is steadily building a global pool of leaders able to navigate political complexity, develop partnerships, and drive change in uncertain environments. This feeds into the Partnership for International Politics and Diplomacy for Health's broader mission to strengthen leadership for health in an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape.

At the heart of the programme is a practitioner-to-practitioner approach. Rather than focusing on technical solutions alone, the programme creates space for participants to reflect on leadership challenges, share experiences from diverse contexts, and learn from one another's successes and setbacks.

Throughout the programme, in five online sessions and a one-week in-person Masterclass in Sweden, fellows explored six core themes: how decisions are made, both formally and informally; how to build trust and networks; how to lead with courage and seize opportunities; how to engage with the private sector; how to manage failure and uncertainty; and how to communicate effectively in political contexts.



Across the virtual sessions and in-person workshops, a number of recurring insights emerged. Faculty reflected on the importance of acting before perfect solutions are available, recognising that progress often begins with taking the first step. Discussions also highlighted the value of bringing diverse stakeholders into the conversation, particularly when addressing complex health challenges that require collective action across sectors and interests.



This year's faculty members included **Aparajita Ramakrishnan**, Director, Family Planning, Gates Foundation; **David Miliband**, former Foreign Secretary, UK; **Ebere Okereke**, Public Health Advisor; **Elhadj As Sy**, Chair of the Kofi Annan Foundation Board; **Gabriel Leung**, Executive Director, The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust; **Hanan Al Kuwari**, former Minister of Health, Qatar; **Helen Clark**, Gavi board chair; **Helen Evans**, Professor, University of Melbourne; **José Luis Castro**, WHO Special Envoy; **Katrín Jakobsdóttir**, former Prime Minister, Iceland; **Mark Dybul**, former Executive Director of the Global Fund (GFTAM); **Per Alfredsson**, Senior Vice President, AstraZeneca; **Peter Piot**, Professor and founding Executive Director of UNAIDS; **Sania Nishtar**, CEO, Gavi; **Thoraya Obaid**, former Executive Director of UNFPA; and **Toshi Ezoe**, Senior Assistant Minister for Global Health, Japan.





Contributing to the International Policy Debate

The 'Policy engagements' workstream has focused on supporting and advancing the discussions on reforms of the international ecosystem for health. Our contributions ranged from written publications, produced jointly with partners across the world, through thematic roundtable discussions, seminars and side events in conjunction with major global health events, to contributing directly to major reform initiatives, most notably The Accra Reset initiative.

Under the leadership of Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama, the Accra Reset aims to transform development cooperation and advance sovereignty across sectors, starting with health. Our Co-Director, Gunilla Carlsson, joined the Reset's 19-member High-Level Panel on Reform of the Global Health Architecture and Governance, which is developing a set of recommendations for the future of global health. These recommendations will be presented on the sidelines of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly and championed by President Mahama and a group of incumbent Heads of State supporting the initiative.

The Partnership's analyses and publications on global health reform, developed ahead of the launch of the High-Level Panel, have provided a strong foundation for our active and constructive engagement in its work. They have proven to be appreciated and valuable resources, repeatedly referenced by the Panel, and informing the Panel's discussions on issues including the definition of global public goods, the transition to domestic health financing, and reform options for major global health initiatives.



A foundational piece of work for the Partnership, entitled *Four paradigm shifts to shape an agenda for global health reforms*, was published in The Lancet in January. Co-authored with partners across regions, the four paradigm shifts concept is intended as a framework to guide collective thinking around the future of global health and shaping an inclusive reform agenda.

With our ongoing series of Insights papers, where we summarize and analyse the latest global health reform discussions, trends and perspectives, we have established a product which gives the global health community an accessible overview and understanding of the fast-evolving reform landscape. Four Insights papers were published during the Spring, and were complemented by slide decks and infographics, further increasing their accessibility and reach.

The Partnership has organised roundtable discussions on the future of financing for global health, covering the evolving role of ODA in health; domestic resource mobilisation for health; and financing global health functions from sources beyond ODA. The discussions involved over 20 thought leaders in global health financing, and yielded a summary report, a policy brief and an OpEd.

When it comes to reforms of the World Health Organization, the Partnership has convened leading health experts to advance discussions on what kind of WHO the world needs for the future. This resulted in a Policy Brief entitled *At a crossroads: The future of the World Health Organization*, and a subsequent publication in The Lancet together with partners, making the case for focused and ambitious reform of WHO. This was also followed by an OpEd in Think Global Health on the need for deep and structural WHO reforms.

As a contribution to the global health architecture reform discussion, the Partnership has developed a policy brief on Global Public Goods and Global Functions for Health (to be published), with the aim of bringing conceptual clarity and distinguishing between these two crucial concepts.

Following the numerous discussions, processes and initiatives around global health architecture reforms, and assessing their relative importance and impact, has proven particularly labour-intensive. In this regard, the Insights papers have not only been a useful asset for external partners but also for the Partnership's ability to remain well-informed in our work across our various engagements.

Strengthening the institutional network for health diplomacy

The Health Diplomacy Institutional Network (HDIN) brings together academic institutions with existing health diplomacy programs or research, or with the intention to start such programs.

The purpose of the network is to foster a robust academic and practical framework for health diplomacy and to establish a global platform for collaborative innovation in this field. This network seeks to enhance the efforts of leading institutions worldwide, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, research, and best practices in health diplomacy

In the past six months:

- The network expanded with three new institutions, and now includes 37 members across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Oceania.
- New working groups were established on programme development, research, evaluation, negotiations, and policy engagement.
- A shared repository of teaching materials has been formed to support education and capacity building across institutions.

More about the network, engaged institutions and programs can be found at <https://healthdiplomacynetwork.com>



Advancing research and knowledge

Research efforts build on and complement the other three workstreams.

By incorporating the latest evidence and findings, the Partnership continuously strengthens its training programs and policy work. At the same time, regular dialogue with global health leaders and decision-makers helps ensure research questions are relevant for scholars and practitioners alike.

The Partnership continues to coordinate a consortium of over 40 researchers (including a number of younger colleagues) and practitioners from around the world, working on a potentially forthcoming Lancet Series on Diplomacy for Health. Four papers have been submitted and are currently being revised following peer review.

The Series have a potential to present a new framework as well as explore outcomes of health diplomacy, by looking at different practitioner views on “successes” and “failures” of health diplomacy as well as tensions between national and regional/global interests. The series will also look to the future and propose strategies and priorities for how health diplomacy can be used to navigate a new complex world and achieve better outcomes. Throughout the Series, perspectives from new emerging fora and actors as well as powerhouses of the future, are included.

In parallel, an interdisciplinary research network on global health governance and diplomacy has been established in Stockholm. The network brings together researchers and practitioners to address key questions in the field and strengthen links between research and policy.

We are currently focusing on:

- Cross-cutting themes related to politics, power, decolonialisation, equity and political economy.
- Reforms and financing of the international system for health, focusing on underlying dynamics and changing roles.
- Regionalisation and South-South partnerships in health (drivers and dynamics in various regions, governance challenges, nationalism).
- Cross-sectoral collaboration e.g. with climate diplomacy.
- The role of non-state actors and the private sector in health governance (commercial determinants of health, the role of philanthropy etc.).
- Governance models, e.g. related to the function of institutional boards.

Initial outputs from the research network include joint academic publications and on-going collaborations with international partners across the world.

Events and roundtable discussions

The Partnership also convened a series of events and roundtable discussions

1. **Three round table discussions on the future of financing for global health, covering:**
 - i. The role of official development assistance (ODA)
 - ii. Domestic resources
 - iii. Financing of global functions for health

These discussions resulted in a policy brief, a summary report, and an opinion piece published.

2. **Round table discussion on Reform of the World Health Organization (WHO).**

The Partnership has convened leading health experts to advance discussions on what kind of WHO the world needs for the future. This resulted in several publications, including a publication in The Lancet together with partners.

3. **Round table discussion on Global Public Goods and Global Functions for Health.**

In addition to a smaller round table discussion, a policy brief was published focusing on the distinction between Global Public Goods and Global Functions for Health, as a critical part of the future global health system.

4. **Connected Futures: Equity, Climate, and Health – How to navigate and use diplomacy in a complex political reality – Side event during PMAC in Bangkok.**

Organised by the International Health Policy Program (IHPP) Foundation in collaboration with the Health Diplomacy Institutional Network, this Prince Mahidol Award (PMAC) 2026 side meeting discussed the alignment of climate change, health, equity, and innovation across governance and multilateral systems.



5. Thriving in a Disruptive World: Rethinking Global Health Politics and Diplomacy – Side event during the WHS Nairobi.

On the sidelines of this year's World Health Summit Regional Meeting in Nairobi, Global Health Otherwise Media and The Partnership for International Politics and Diplomacy for Health hosted an interactive breakfast discussion centred on key skills emerging leaders need to thrive in the rapidly evolving global health landscape. Participants emphasised the need to convey expert knowledge in ways that resonate with decision-makers; leverage media as a powerful tool for influence; remain well-attuned to today's political realities; identify windows of opportunity to pursue specific agendas; and build and maintain trust among colleagues.

6. What's at Stake and What Comes Next for Global Health Reform – Side Event during WHA79:

On the sidelines of the 79th World Health Assembly, at the flagship Health Diplomacy House event, the Partnership convened a conversation around global health reform among eminent and emerging global health leaders, including faculty and fellows from the Partnership's Executive Program. The discussion circled around 'elephants in the room'; narratives that must be challenged; questions that are still avoided; and uncomfortable truths that have not been articulated so far in the reform discourse.



To learn more about the events and seminars visit:

<https://globalhealthdiplomacy.se/events-and-seminars>



Publications

Articles and Commentaries

1. Four paradigm shifts to shape an agenda for global health reforms (Lancet 14 February 2026)
2. A WHO worth fighting for: the case for focused, ambitious reform (Lancet 14 May 2026)
3. No One Wins If Multilateralism for Health Loses (Think Global Health 22 April 2026)
4. Reforming WHO: Five Considerations for the Next Director General (Think Global Health 13 July 2026)
5. A New Paradigm for Global Health Financing (Project Syndicate 4 August 2026)
6. Same actors, same processes, same outcomes: Global Health Architecture Reform or Restoration? (PLOS Global Public Health 8 July 2026)

Policy Briefs and Reflections

1. Transforming the Global Health Ecosystem: Reflection Paper (15 January 2026)
2. At a crossroads: The future of the World Health Organization (28 April 2026)
3. Global Public Goods and Global Functions for Health (6 May 2026)
4. The Promise of Accra Reset: Setting a Bold Direction for Reform (29 June 2026)
5. Provision of Global Public Goods for Health – Who pays, who decides, and who benefits (to be released)



Insights papers

- Four Insights papers were released during the spring and published on the Partnership's website.

Reports and Presentations

1. ODA in decline – rethinking its role for health: Summary of the 1st roundtable discussion (16 December 2025)
2. Seminar report – Future global health functions and the role of WHO: Summary report (23 January 2026)
3. Accelerating the transition to domestic health financing: Summary of the 2nd roundtable discussion (6 February 2026)
4. Financing global functions for health: Can we move beyond ODA? Summary of the 3rd roundtable discussion (6 March 2026)
5. What are global health reforms about, and can they make a difference? (March 2026)
6. What's at stake and what comes next for global health reform (May 2026)
7. Health Diplomacy House Seminar Report (26 May 2026)

All publications can be found here: [Resources | Global Health Diplomacy](#)



Looking ahead

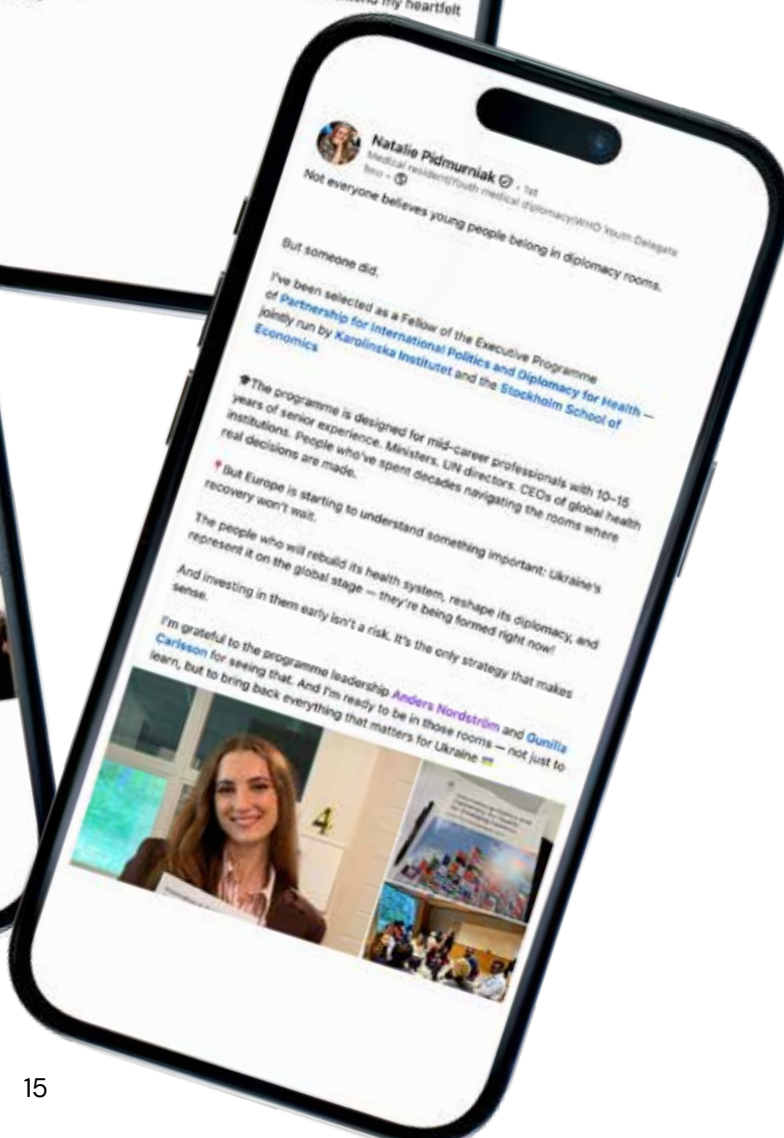
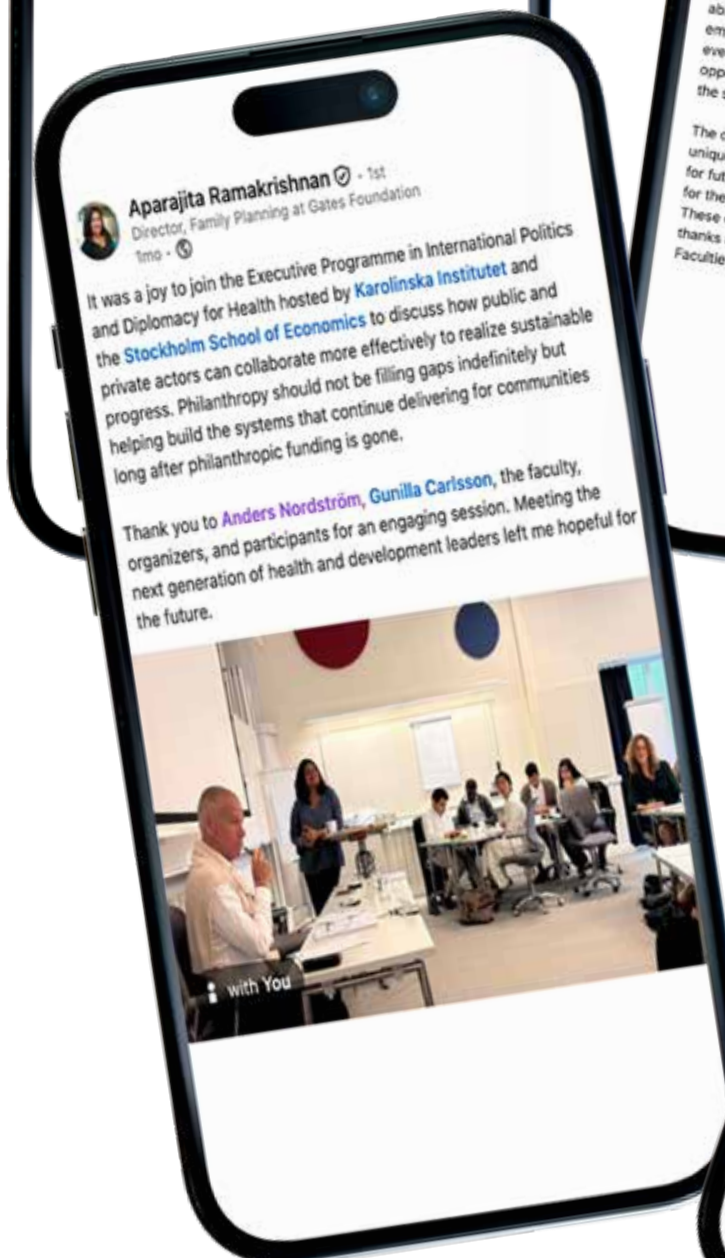
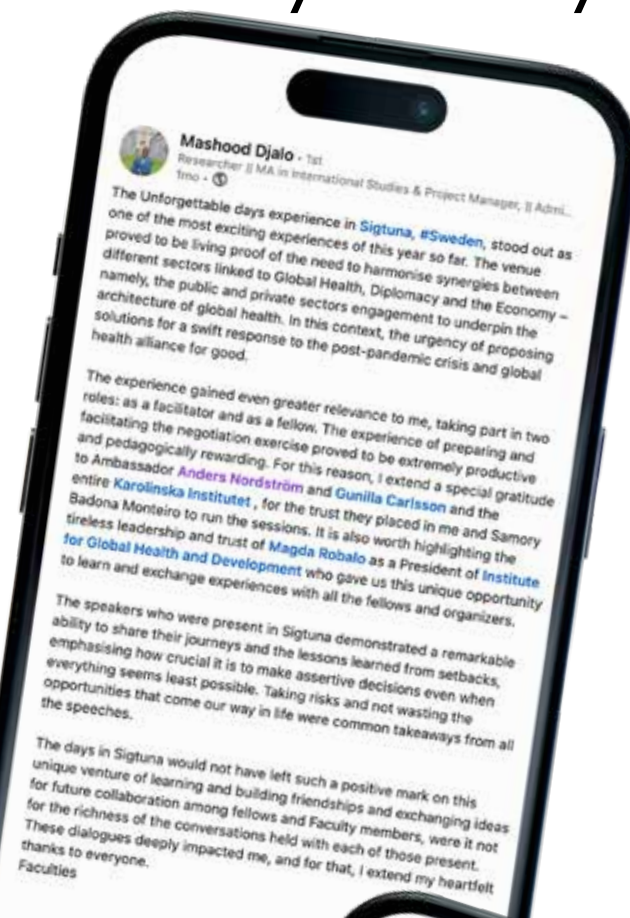
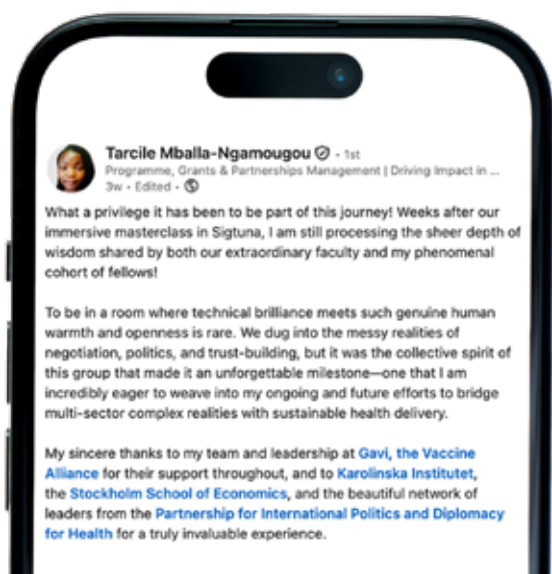
Demand for the Partnership's work continues to grow, particularly in the context of on-going reforms of the global health architecture. The coming period will therefore centre on scaling impact while maintaining the Partnership's role as an independent platform for dialogue and analysis.

In the second half of 2026, the Partnership will focus on:

- Launching the next year's Executive Program.
- Nurturing the community of former fellows of the Executive Program; this community will continue to expand and provide an important platform for exchange and collaboration beyond the program itself.
- Publishing Insights papers as well as thematic publications; for instance, we are planning to deepen the understanding on good governance for global health.
- Continuing its engagement in global health system reform, including support to on-going international processes such as the WHO-hosted joint process on reforms of the global health architecture and the Accra Reset initiative.
- Further developing the institutional network, including potential regional hubs.
- Advancing the Lancet Series on Diplomacy for Health towards publication and dissemination.



What our Fellows and Faculty were saying



Our Partners

We are grateful for the support from the Gates Foundation, The Institute of Philanthropy and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs making this work and progress possible.

Gates Foundation



Please visit our two websites for more information

The Partnership for International Politics and Diplomacy for Health
globalhealthdiplomacy.se

The Health Diplomacy Institutional Network
healthdiplomacynetwork.com



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