Knowledge for a Sustainable World
KIT Royal Tropical Institute is an independent centre of expertise and education for sustainable development. We assist governments, NGOs and private corporations around the world to build inclusive and sustainable societies, informing best practices and measuring their impact. Guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, our work focuses on health, gender, economic development and intercultural cooperation.

Our campus in Amsterdam houses a training centre for students and professionals, and is the home of SDG House: a community of sustainability experts and social entrepreneurs with a membership of 50+ organisations. KIT owns and operates Amsterdam Tropen Hotel, De Tropen Café, and offers office and conference facilities in our heritage building, the revenues of which contribute to KIT’s mission.
Since 2015, KIT Royal Tropical Institute has conducted nearly 500 projects across more than 100 countries.
The main entrance of KIT Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam

Our Expertise
Knowledge for Sustainable Economic Development

KIT compiles, analyses and develops knowledge on sustainable economic development. We use this expertise to improve livelihoods, strengthen food security and increase the economic resilience of individuals and communities in low- and middle-income countries.

Our 35 advisors have a diversity of expertise in food systems, gender, youth employment, value chain development in the agricultural sector, human rights in agribusiness, and financial inclusion. We support businesses, government services and civil society organisations to improve their practices and maximise their impact on sustainable development.

We broker access to applied knowledge through evidence documentation, advice, training, education, knowledge sharing events and platforms.

We operate at the intersection of theory and practice and between policy and implementation, translating evidence-based insight into meaningful social and economic impact. Our staff combine their content expertise with the ability to offer a diverse suite of advisory services, including policy and programme design and implementation, evaluation and impact assessment, capacity building through coaching, and knowledge management.

We emphasise systems thinking to ensure a holistic approach to sustainable development. Our approach is practical and grounded in the local context.

Knowledge for Gender Equality

At KIT, we promote and develop approaches that effectively lead to gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment. We move beyond conventional gender and development approaches by focusing on the transformative potential of gender work.

Our international gender team draws on more than 25 years of experience in gender work in international development, across a broad range of sectors, themes and organisations. We address gender equality and transformative change in relation to food security, natural resource management, energy, finance, agribusiness value chains, and health. We also have a sound basis of stand-alone women’s rights and empowerment initiatives. In addition to our gender and thematic expertise, we bring rich experience and strategic leadership in organisational change, capacity development and learning, knowledge management and applied research.

We work with a diverse group of partners and clients to close the gap between gender intentions and achieving gender equality and empowerment. We partner with organisations that have a strong interest in pushing the boundaries through transformative and systemic change in gender relations. We also work with partners and clients who have a growing interest in strengthening how their work can be more gender-responsive.

We emphasise transformative and participatory learning to help our partners to critically reflect on their gender initiatives while offering them a deeper understanding of how gender dynamics affect and are affected by their work.
Knowledge for Global Health

At KIT, we envision a world where everyone can realise their full health potential. We pursue this mission with expertise in health system strengthening, epidemiology, health education, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Our multidisciplinary health unit consists of more than 40 health professionals with knowledge of and experience working in low- and middle-income countries around the world. Guided by the Sustainable Development Goals, we work to improve equity in global health.

We advance good health and wellbeing as a fundamental human right, with a particular focus on the poor and excluded. To do so, we partner with local and national governments, humanitarian agencies, NGOs and other international and local organisations, offering targeted advice, research and fresh insights based on a deep knowledge of the local context.

Improving the performance of global health interventions is critical to our approach. Working collaboratively with our partners, we facilitate locally-led reform of countries’ health care models and strategies, taking into account quality of care, human resources for health, health financing and governance. But we also look beyond health care, analysing other socio-economic and cultural determinants of health such as education, employment, or local beliefs and practices. True to KIT’s commitment to ‘Leave No One Behind’, we have specific expertise in health systems in fragile contexts, including those affected by conflict, natural disaster or climate change.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are key to a fulfilling life, but many people — particularly young women — face limited access to appropriate knowledge and services and see their rights routinely violated. We strengthen the capacities of our partners and clients to collect data and evidence to inform better and inclusive access to quality SRHR services.

Our epidemiology team harnesses the power of data to help health professionals make evidence-informed decisions. Through our Centre for Applied Spatial Epidemiology, we develop and perform state-of-the-art spatial analyses of health data, while supporting health decision-makers to prioritise and target interventions according to local variations in their disease burden. Since data quality is paramount for good decision-making, we also develop innovative approaches and tools for quality assurance and good epidemiological practice.

Education for Global Health

Through training and education, we support future generations of global health leaders.

Led by our multidisciplinary team of health researchers, educators and advisors, we offer masters’ programmes and advanced courses at our training facilities in Amsterdam. We also conduct regional and tailor-made training programmes and support global health leadership through e-learning.

Health professionals from all over the world attend our courses, from a range of disciplinary backgrounds: doctors, nurses or health managers working in hospitals, ministries of health, NGOs and other organisations. By bringing together people from different countries and regions, KIT’s international courses create a forum for linking and exchanging experiences among a broad range of health professionals and development practitioners, both during the courses and afterwards through our alumni network.

Our training programmes respond to current global developments in the health field. Our curriculum is known for its practical applicability, multidisciplinary approach and its interactive, participatory training methods. Our educators are leading professionals in the field of public and international health, and many of them are actively involved in ongoing health development projects around the world. They use this experience to enrich the learning of participants and situate theory in the context of real-world experience.

The KIT Alumni network is a dynamic, international community. In the past fifty years, over 3,000 health professionals have studied at KIT. They return to their home countries to become leaders in the field, contributing to health care and health policy at local, regional and national levels.

“There is no doubt that my KIT MPH experience marked a milestone in my professional development and life post-MPH. Since my graduation, I have worked for major donor-funded disease control programs in Nigeria where we have used scarce resources to push back the spread of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria... My time at KIT certainly gave me the knowledge, skills and confidence to do the work I do now.”

Eno Ekaete Usoroh, from Nigeria, MPH
Intercultural Professionals

Intercultural Professionals is KIT’s intercultural training, coaching and consultancy branch. For more than 100 years, we have helped businesses, governments and professionals to perform better in intercultural contexts and achieve a more effective global workforce.

We believe in the value of effective intercultural communication for the performance of individuals, teams, and whole organisations, while helping to achieve a more inclusive and sustainable world. Our approach, which sets out by creating 'cultural awareness', equips our clients with powerful tools to manage cultural differences and to operate successfully in an increasingly intercultural society.

Our service offering comprises tailor-made training, coaching and consultancy for individuals and teams with intercultural challenges from a variety of sectors, and on all professional levels within an organisation: from executive boards to HR managers, sales and client service teams.

We work with a range of sectors and organisations including global corporations, small- and medium-sized companies, health care providers, law enforcement agencies, schools, and national and local governments.

Through our global network of intercultural experts, participants experience multiple perspectives and learn to identify challenges and strategies to address them. We offer face-to-face trainings, workshops and coaching sessions, e-learning, live virtual classroom trainings and blended learning programs using online assessments and e-learning platform.

Advances in technology, such as social media, digital communities, and video conferencing, have led some to believe that intercultural training, and the skills that it imparts, are no longer necessary. In fact, the reverse is true, and in a fast-moving interconnected world, the need for cultural education and awareness is arguably more important than ever.

Hospitality for a Sustainable Future

Perched on the edge of Amsterdam's Oosterpark, KIT’s campus is home to world-class conferences and events, De Tropen Café and the Amsterdam Tropen Hotel.

These venues are a vital component of our efforts to create an inclusive and sustainable world. The proceeds of our hospitality services contribute directly to projects undertaken by our advisors in global health, economic development and gender equality.

Completed in 1926, our historic building has become a hotspot for conferences and events, including those dedicated to sustainability. A national landmark, it is a versatile location, equally suited to intimate events or conferences for up to 900 people. Our professional hospitality staff deliver the highest standard of event planning and services, while striving to organise each event in a sustainable manner. This is reflected in the event partnerships we forge, the food we serve and the suppliers and materials we use.

We also own and operate the Amsterdam Tropen Hotel, which is located next door, on the edge of our building’s main courtyard. It has 80 rooms overlooking all of Amsterdam and the surrounding countryside. It also holds a Golden Green Key, the highest international hallmark for sustainability in the recreation and leisure industry.

Our building also houses the De Tropen Café, a popular gathering point for the local community, tourists, visitors to the nearby Tropenmuseum, members of the SDG House community and our employees. With a menu and decor inspired by cultures from all over the world, De Tropen is the perfect spot to enjoy a tasty lunch or some delicious finger food accompanied by a glass of wine, cocktail or local beer. It also organises regular events, including get-togethers to raise awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals and stimulate collaboration on their behalf.
Established in 2017, SDG House is a group of more than 50 organisations that work towards the SDGs through a diversity of work and activity covering urban development, impact investment, inclusive finance, fair trade, organic product development and more. Through cooperation and collaboration, members can combine their individual energy, efforts, means and knowledge to increase their impact. Members also gain access to a menu of services provided by and for members as well as a host of matchmaking and other events.

Interest in SDG House is growing, and we are now inviting new members and partners to join our community. Our ambition is a worldwide network of SDG Houses that connect people, companies and NGOs that want to ‘Walk the Talk’ and collaborate for the benefit of the Goals.

As the founder of SDG House, we help organisations of all sizes to realise their SDG potential. We offer a range of tailor-made services that help others to understand the impact of their development or commercial activities and make them more sustainable. We also scrutinize our own operations to ensure they are as socially and environmentally friendly as possible. We continuously evaluate new ways to make our facilities more efficient, and we are making steady progress in lowering our carbon footprint, reducing waste and making smart decisions with respect to the products and suppliers we use on our premises.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are in our DNA. They inspire and drive our knowledge work and form the ideological foundation of SDG House, our community of like-minded NGOs, entrepreneurs and businesses based in Amsterdam.
A doctor’s office in Pakistan visited by KIT epidemiologists as part of our work on tuberculosis.

Our Flagship Work
Partnership for Inclusive Agricultural Transformation in Africa

Supported by local knowledge and experience, agricultural development can improve the lives of millions of smallholder farmers in Africa.

Led by Africans with roots in farming communities across the continent, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) puts smallholder farmers at the centre of Africa’s growing economy. AGRA is implementing the Partnership for Inclusive Agricultural Transformation in Africa (PIATA) programme funded by a consortium of donors. The partnership seeks to catalyse and sustain inclusive agricultural growth in Africa by increasing incomes and improving food security for 30 million smallholder households and supporting eleven African countries on a pathway to sustainable agricultural transformation.

AGRA is seeking sustainable agricultural sector transformation by improving agricultural policies and state capability, and the performance of seed and input supply, agricultural finance and agricultural extension systems.

With its strong reputation for executing complex and diverse evaluation assignments, KIT’s monitoring, evaluation and learning team is AGRA’s partner in monitoring PIATA’s progress, ensuring that successes can be tracked, and challenges acknowledged. The results are shared among the participating countries, enabling maximum value for money and accountability. Based on our extensive experience in the focus countries and local networks, our in-depth knowledge of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, KIT developed a rigorous mixed-method framework to assess changes at both farm and system levels.

KIT tracks systemic changes by conducting stakeholder interviews, workshops, and focus group discussions in the participating countries. The results feed into an interactive dashboard developed by KIT, allowing the data to be accessed by a country- and crop-based focus.

Every year, the challenges, opportunities, and progress of the various systems, such as markets, inputs, seeds, finance, policies and government support, are tracked and reported on for each country, allowing systemic progress to be assessed over time. At the household level, the wealth of data collected provides a benchmark upon which AGRA’s future results will be measured and compared. By helping AGRA to measure, quantify, and evaluate its work, KIT supports its positive impact on the lives of millions of farmers across the African continent.

Private Seed Sector Development Burundi

Using high-quality seed is one of the most straightforward and cheapest ways to use agricultural land, water and nutrients more efficiently, and as the quality of seeds improves, so do farmers’ yields.

As the world’s population grows, so does the demand for food and water. This increasing need places pressure on land resources, resulting in declining crop productivity and a degradation in land quality. This is particularly evident in Burundi, where around 90 per cent of the population depend on agriculture to make a living. A high population density, soil erosion, and low fertilizer use have led to a significant loss in soil fertility, leaving three-quarters of the population suffering from food insecurity, and over half from malnourishment.

The Private Seed Sector Development (PSSD) project aims to double the production and incomes of farmer households in Burundi and to grow the market for quality seed and firmly establish commercial seed production and marketing. By sustainably intensifying the production of food crops such as maize, beans and potatoes for the domestic market, national food shortages can be reduced, and vital economic opportunities can be made available to producers.

The project is working to ensure availability and use of quality-assured seed through the establishment of a commercially viable and self-governing seed sector, supported by client-oriented seed services. Through a network of public-private partnerships which intervene through the full seed value chain, the project focuses on scaling-up successfully emerging commercial seed producers, the professionalisation of national seed traders, unlocking international private sector expertise, and the large-scale promotion of quality seed use to grow the market into a stable, self-sustaining commercial sector.

KIT brings a solid track record and internationally recognised leading expertise in seed sector development and engages the strong networks we have built in the country. Our strength is built on quality, pragmatic advice on seed regulatory reform, seed policies, and seed sector programme implementation for transformative change across all levels of the seed value chain. In addition, KIT provides PSSD with a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning system to capture and share new knowledge on what works in seed sector development, which is helping to increase productivity and to reduce poverty and food insecurities across Burundi.
Demystifying the Cocoa Sector

Confronting common assumptions and misconceptions about the cocoa sector is critical to helping cocoa farmers earn a living income.

Despite decades of investment in the cocoa sector in West Africa, cocoa is still often referred to as a ‘poor man’s crop’. Some advocates believe the poverty of cocoa households is untenable and that it represents an existential threat to the future of the cocoa industry. Others stress that we need to help reduce household dependence on cocoa and make them more resilient. But what is the true scope of the problem and what are households’ current livelihood strategies?

Until recently, the lack of quality data and data availability made it difficult for researchers to reliably estimate income, wealth and poverty in cocoa-growing regions. This deprived cocoa stakeholders of information they could otherwise use to help improve the livelihoods of cocoa farmers.

Beginning in late 2016, KIT set out to fill this gap by researching cocoa-growing communities in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. Together with local researchers, KIT surveyed 3,000 cocoa-growing households and conducted dozens of focus group discussions. The research and subsequent report, entitled *Demystifying the Cocoa Sector*, was produced with support from the International Trade Initiative, the Jacobs Foundation, the Lindt Cocoa Foundation, UTZ and the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa.

*Demystifying the Cocoa Sector* provides unprecedented transparency into a diversity of issues in the cocoa sector such as household demographics, wealth, income, poverty and intra-household dynamics. It also examines food security and nutrition, crop choices and crop diversification, while providing new insight into why households grow cocoa and other aspects of cocoa production and marketing. It offers a holistic picture of the cocoa-growing communities and explains why cocoa, for all its challenges, remains an attractive option for many households.

As a knowledge institute, KIT believes that such research should not be seen as a cost, but as an investment in the future of cocoa. We provide free and open access to the study’s database.

Our Flagship Work

Roland Kielman

Professional Development Programme for Gender Trainers

Together with the UN Women Training Centre, KIT offers a comprehensive training programme that supports gender trainers from across the world to reinvigorate their work to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Gender training has been a mainstay of gender and development initiatives for nearly three decades. It was originally conceived as a way to challenge the root causes of gender inequality and disempowerment in international development. But as it became more popular in the mainstream, it increasingly became a tool of development rather than a fundamental challenge to it.

The collaboration between KIT and the UN Women Training Centre takes gender training back to its roots by emphasising a feminist analysis of development right from the get-go. Rather than operating within the confines of dominant development ideas, participants critically analyse the foundations of gender inequity in development. The programme offers a safe space where common assumptions are challenged, while leaving room for more fluid interpretations of gender that better represent individuals’ daily lives and realities.

Gender trainers often develop their training skills on the job, so for many participants, this is their first formal ‘professional education’ in this field. The six-month programme provides a unique opportunity for participants to sharpen their gender training skills and knowledge of gender in development concepts. The training boosts participants’ overall ‘gender fluency’, enabling them to speak to and work with gender across a variety of topics and themes in development. It also creates space for them to renew and establish their commitment to gender training as a transformative process towards gender equality.

The curriculum is based on KIT’s 25 years of experience in gender training, evaluations, and our publishing and convening efforts on gender training. The content is co-designed with renowned gender experts from both the global south and north. Participants learn through in-person and virtual sessions that use a combination of lectures, guest presentations and practical activities and assignments.
A married cocoa farmer in Sumatra, Indonesia
Gender Lens Investing with the Austrian Development Bank

Development banks are well-positioned to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. With KIT’s help, the Austrian Development Bank is leading the way.

In recent years, the Austrian Development Bank (OeEB) has identified gender equality as organisational priority, because investing in gender equality is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. But what was the best way to holistically integrate gender into its investment process and workplace? And how could it do this in a way that would also influence its clients and investment partners to make smart investments that simultaneously benefit and empower women and girls?

Backed by KIT’s deep experience in ‘gender lens’ investing, our financial inclusion team supported OeEB to get to the bottom of these questions.

Beginning in 2019, KIT worked with OeEB to forge a 5-year Gender Action Plan, a roadmap of key steps and targets for better-integrating gender into the bank’s investment processes across different sectors and portfolios. A comprehensive service line for gender smart finance was also developed, designed to support OeEB’s partners and clients to incorporate a ‘gender lens’ into their own investment strategies.

These services provide participating institutions with a range of technical assistance to help them advance their own gender journey: from research and strategy to training and gender-smart financial product and service design. The KIT-OeEB collaboration also produced a ‘gender marker’ to facilitate reflection on the reach and impact that OeEB’s investments in financial institutions have on women.

Conference on Mental Health Support in Crisis Settings

Nearly a quarter of the 70 million people displaced by conflict and other crises need psychological support to cope with the trauma they have endured. Most will not receive it, unless the international community takes decisive action.

In early October 2019, world leaders gathered at KIT’s landmark building in Amsterdam for an international conference to advocate for mental health support as a basic need in humanitarian settings, one just important as food, water or shelter.

Led by Minister Sigrid Kaag and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the two-day conference brought together more than 400 mental health experts, policymakers, ministers, donors and people with lived experience in humanitarian settings. Her Majesty Queen Máxima, KIT’s patron, also lent her support to the cause, participating in the second day of the programme. It was a potentially pivotal moment, with representatives from more than 50 countries putting pen to paper on an international declaration to scale up mental health and psychosocial support for humanitarian emergencies.

KIT was active throughout the event. Mark Schneiders, our CEO, kicked-off the conference with welcoming remarks, and advisors from KIT’s global health unit were on hand to highlight our work to strengthen health systems and mental health support in fragile settings.

For example, together with the Netherlands Red Cross and Light for the World, we piloted a new crash course to encourage the use of psychological first aid in crisis settings. And representatives of the STRENGTHS project — of which KIT is a partner — hosted a session about the project’s efforts to train Syrian refugees to provide mental health support to fellow refugees.

The conference was a natural fit for our Conferences & Events team, who combine our organisational commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of our planet with world-class banqueting and event planning. This identity, driven by our support for the Sustainable Development Goals, is reflected in the daily choices we make concerning event partnerships, suppliers, materials, products and catering.

Moving ahead, KIT is committed to hosting more health-related conferences and other events with partners dedicated to securing a sustainable future.
World leaders gather at KIT for an international mental health conference, hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
Strengthening SRHR Through Higher Education in Mali

Protracted conflict and socio-cultural norms make it difficult for people to realise their basic sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In Mali, maternal mortality, gender-based violence, fertility pressure, and child marriage are high. While women and girls, especially in rural areas, face restricted access to and information on reproductive health care and family planning. To strengthen sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), KIT is applying its expertise in Mali’s higher education system.

Since 2014, we have worked with Mali’s National Institute of Training in Health Sciences (INFSS) and the Department of Education and Research in Public Health (DERSP) to develop new SRHR master’s programmes. Our advisors helped to ensure the programmes’ content appropriately responded to the local context, conducting research into the needs of the labour market and developing gender strategies to strengthen career opportunities for doctors, nurses and midwives.

By 2019, nearly 50 students — most of them women — had completed or enrolled in the new INFSS programme and received internships with a network of local partners established by the project. Meanwhile, SRHR modules have been integrated into the DERSP master’s curriculum, which is now accredited by tropED, an international network of institutions for higher education in global health.

Strengthening INFSS’s institutional capacity and research capabilities were also a priority. KIT delivered trainings and short courses to master’s teachers, which were complemented with a PhD trajectory in both Mali and the Vrij Universiteit Amsterdam. Staff from the institute’s research department were trained to facilitate ongoing research and to provide potential clients from public, private and community health organisations with new data on SRHR. To help the institutes remain competitive, KIT, together with MDF Training and Consultancy, also reinforced both institutional management and quality assurance mechanisms to help to meet national and regional accreditation standards.

Today our partnership with INFSS and DERSP continues as part of the FORCE Mali project, supported by NUFFIC’s Orange Knowledge Programme. Together, we are strengthening the health care system and SRHR for young people by improving the quality of training for health providers in Mopti and Sikasso.

Researching Sexual Violence in Humanitarian Settings

Sexual and gender-based violence is one of the greatest human rights and public health challenges faced during humanitarian emergencies. Few places have experienced this more than northern Nigeria, South Yemen and Haiti.

Sexual violence is present in all societies, but it is usually exacerbated by conflict or natural disaster, where the breakdown of law and order allows perpetrators to abuse with impunity. Women and girls often don’t report attacks they suffer at the hands of community members due to social pressure and concerns about their loyalty. And while women and girls are the most common victims, sexual violence against men and boys remains an under-reported reality. As a consequence, reliable data about the impact of sexual violence in humanitarian situations is scarce.

With funding from the European Union, KIT is conducting research to improve the understanding of sexual violence among high-risk groups in countries affected by conflict and natural disasters. The study will generate evidence, identify good practices and share lessons about sexual violence in humanitarian settings across South Yemen, northern Nigeria and Haiti.

Specifically, our research is exploring the extent to which all people, regardless of their age or gender, are affected by sexual and gender-based violence in these fragile contexts. It will also examine the medical and psychosocial services that survivors have access to — and the quality of those services — to identify gaps in protection and sharing best practices that could be reproduced in other humanitarian settings.

Service providers, humanitarian actors and policymakers will ultimately use this evidence base to better respond to the needs and rights of victims.
Strengthening Health Systems in South Sudan

Even in the most fragile contexts, community health programmes can improve access to basic health services.

South Sudan has experienced significant levels of fragility, conflict and violence for nearly half a century. It is estimated that over 400,000 lives have been lost since 2013 due to conflict and millions more have been displaced. With limited access to basic health services, it has some of the worst health indicators in the world, with mainly women and children affected.

The Health Pooled Fund (HPF), of which KIT is a consortium partner, is a partnership with South Sudan’s Ministry of Health. It focuses on strengthening the government’s capacity to meet basic needs, supporting around 80% of health services to provide essential healthcare to approximately 10 million people. The HPF programme is using the study’s findings to enhance community engagement and to improve health outcomes across the country. The study revealed that the majority of the barriers to effective implementation were the result of insufficient coordination between the different implementing organisations, health authorities and funders. Community members are happy to participate in the implementation of health initiatives that will benefit them, and community health programmes of any kind can thrive when community members are engaged in every step of the implementation process.

As the BHI was new and lacking documented evidence of its practice, KIT’s operational research experts undertook a study to guide its implementation. The HPF programme is using the study’s findings to enhance community engagement and to improve health outcomes across the country. The study revealed that the majority of the barriers to effective implementation were the result of insufficient coordination between the different implementing organisations, health authorities and funders. Community members are happy to participate in the implementation of health initiatives that will benefit them, and community health programmes of any kind can thrive when community members are engaged in every step of the implementation process.

In March 2017, the Ministry of Health launched the Boma Health Initiative (BHI), a community health system strengthening initiative intended to bridge the gap between health facilities and communities, increasing equitable access to community health services, and the participation of communities in their ownership and sustainability.

Towards Universal Health Coverage with PERFORM2Scale

Universal health coverage underpins our collective security and prosperity, and key to achieving it are a better-performing health workforce and strong management.

PERFORM2scale is a five-year research project designed to develop and evaluate a sustainable approach to scaling-up district-level management strengthening interventions (MSIs) across Ghana, Malawi and Uganda. The project uses action research cycles to enable health management teams to analyse workforce performance and service delivery problems in their own district. After which, they develop and implement appropriate work plans, learn about management, and develop and implement strategies.

KIT is responsible for the project’s context analysis and process evaluation and contributes to a scale-up approach that is responsive to the diverse and changing decentralised contexts of the three countries. Together with country research teams, KIT’s experts focus on understanding the context of each country, with an emphasis on their political economies. They build a clear picture of the relevant power relations, including how decisions are made and the people and factors that influence the decision-making processes.

During the process evaluation, the factors affecting the implementation and scale-up of the interventions are assessed. Continuous data collection takes place during the implementation and scale-up phase, contributing to an in-depth understanding of how they take place and by what and who this process is influenced. By documenting a project’s development and operation, the reasons for its successful performance can be measured, providing information vital for potential replication and important lessons on the practicalities.

This knowledge is not only relevant for the scale-up of the MSIs, but other similar interventions as well. By improving the chances of a successful scale-up, access to quality health care is increased, and vital steps towards real change and lasting impact are taken, allowing the ultimate vision of UHC to become a reality.
The Health Pooled Fund, of which KIT is a partner, is vaccinating thousands of children in South Sudan.
Evaluating Community-Based Healthcare with the Philips Foundation

Primary health care approaches are the most efficient and cost-effective way to organise a health system, as they can bring quality health provision directly to the doorsteps of those who need it most.

Due to perceptions of quality at primary health facilities many people in low- and middle-income countries first seek health care at major health facilities and hospitals, leading to overburdened services and a reduction in the capacity to deliver more specialised care.

Many women in rural Africa still die from preventable complications during pregnancy and childbirth, of which most can be diagnosed with basic imaging technology. The provision of localised health information and knowledge is also an important factor in raising awareness and encouraging early health-seeking behaviour.

To improve the availability and quality of community-based health care, Philips is building a network of ‘Community Life Centres’ across Africa. These centres offer a community-driven, holistic approach to improve primary healthcare and community wellbeing. Alongside healthcare, the centres also provide solar-powered lighting to improve security at night and safe drinking water for the local population.

To ensure optimal service delivery, KIT works with Philips Foundation to evaluate the impact of this new approach. The KIT team, led by epidemiologists and qualitative specialists, has designed and rolled-out assessments in Kenya and South Africa. Using key informant interviews, focus group discussions, health facility observations, and surveys, KIT is building a picture of what works and what can be improved, the results of which will be used to improve uptake, make tailored adjustments to services and drive increased utilisation.

Intercultural Communication with Newcomers & Employers in Utrecht

For many asylum seekers in the Netherlands, establishing legal residence is the first step in a long journey to integrate into Dutch society.

Settling in a new place inevitably involves experiences with unfamiliar cultural and social norms, not only for newcomers, but also for the governments, social organisations and businesses that work with them. Within this context, communication can be complicated, and individuals’ cultural backgrounds, assumptions and biases can easily lead to misunderstandings, frustration and even conflict. That is why effective intercultural communication is critical.

Together with Randstad and TopTaal, KIT Intercultural Professionals is piloting a training and support programme for newcomers and potential employers in the municipality of Utrecht. The programme is designed to prepare newcomers for employment in the logistics sector by improving their intercultural communication skills and Dutch language capabilities, while also providing them with work experience in the field.

Over the course of the 10-week programme, trainers from Intercultural Professionals introduce newcomers to Dutch work culture by exploring patterns of behaviour and the underlying social norms and values that influence life in the workplace. The training also emphasises the importance of intercultural awareness on both sides. For example, through interactive sessions and role play, newcomers and employers can better understand their own cultural views and assumptions — a key step in enabling them to recognise, respect and navigate cultural differences in the workplace.

Unlike many similar initiatives, this collaboration supports newcomers early in their residency process, which may accelerate their integration into Dutch society. KIT hopes to expand this pilot to other municipalities in 2020.
Cover Photo: Josephine Angelo Hassen, from the Catholic University of South Sudan in Juba, creating a 'business model canvas' during training on Agribusiness Promotion and Entrepreneurship Development under the Nuffic-funded Tailor-Made Training Programme - Mona Dhamankar