

The HRP Alliance

for sexual and reproductive health and rights
research capacity strengthening



World Health
Organization



With a vision to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights globally, the HRP Alliance supports the strengthening of research capacity

In collaboration with HRP, WHO regional and country offices and WHO Collaboration Centres, as well as regional partners, the HRP Alliance brings together institutions conducting research in sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The ultimate goal is to strengthen research capacity in sexual and reproductive health and rights.



A NETWORK OF PARTNERS LIKE NO OTHER

Sound research provides the foundation for effective public policy. That is why the Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP) places the strengthening of research capacity at the core of its unique mandate - singular within the United Nations - to lead research in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

The HRP Alliance helps advance this important agenda. By bringing together institutions conducting research in sexual and reproductive health and rights, the HRP Alliance serves as a vehicle for critical goals: research leadership, training and education, and institutional empowerment.

Initiating activities in 2017, the HRP Alliance fosters strong collaboration by capitalizing on a broad network, which includes research partners, institutional and individual grantees, WHO regional and country offices, WHO Collaborating Centres, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), and the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (AHPSR).

At the centre of the [HRP Alliance](#) are seven 'hubs' which provide regional leadership through scholarships, training, fellowships and institutional mentorship to a large network of regional and subregional [research partners](#).

Located in Brazil, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Pakistan, Thailand and Viet Nam, [the hubs](#) advance HRP goals by supporting HRP research and developing research agendas, and empowering individuals to

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emerge as next-generation scholars of sexual and reproductive health and rights. To ensure the best use of resources, hubs cost-share activities and research that are typically offered through their institutions. Recipients of HRP Alliance support are individuals and institutions, from government agencies to academia.

The external Advisory Group which governs the HRP Alliance is rooted in diversity. [Group members](#) rotate every three years and provide strategic guidance and oversight to hub workplans and reports.

Today, the HRP Alliance continues to build influence. Partner institutions enjoy many benefits, from participating in HRP research, to opportunities for training, mentorship, and institutional development, and collaboration with a large network of researchers. Teamwork has also enabled the HRP Alliance to respond quickly to emerging health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Support the HRP Alliance's commitment to shepherding the emergence of strong evidence towards effective policy-making in public health.

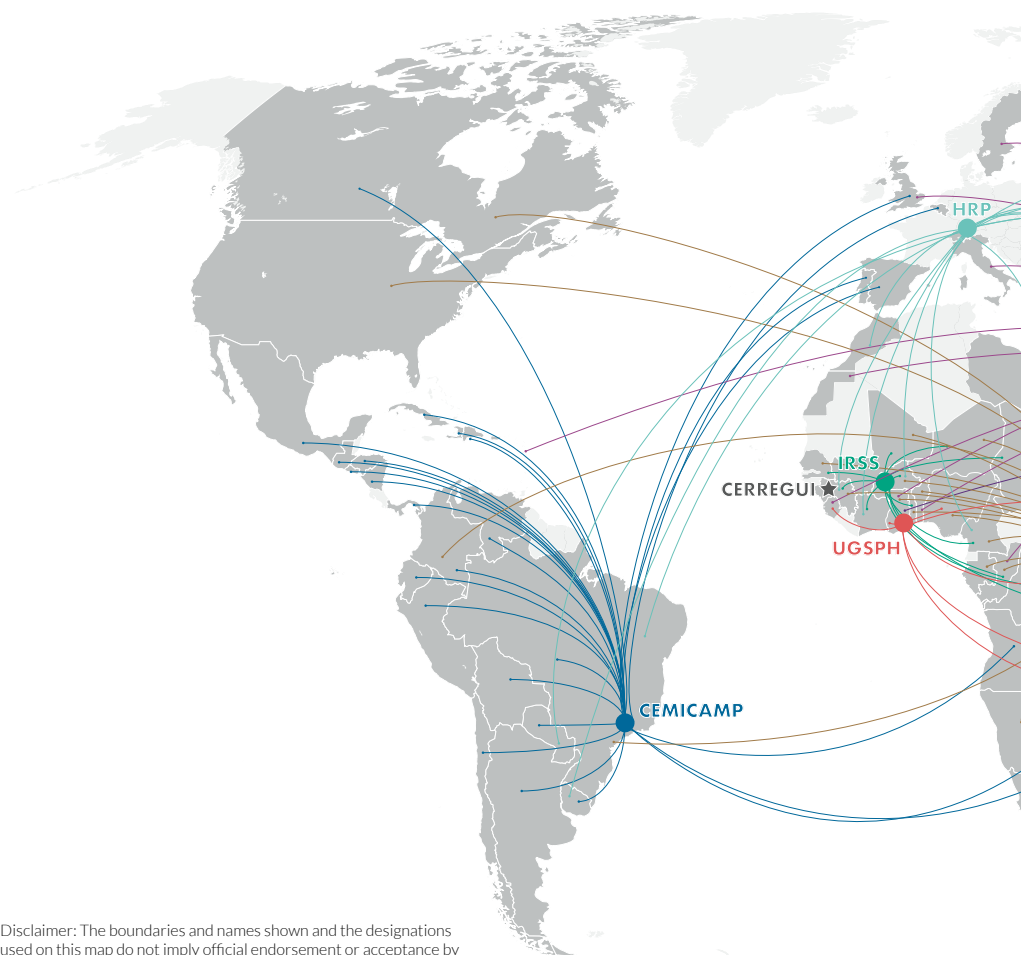
HRP ALLIANCE HUBS

Learn more about the regional hubs at the centre of the HRP, which are entrusted with leading efforts to strengthen research capacity in their regions

AKU, Aga Khan University

APHRC, African Population
Health Research Centre

CEMICAMP, Centro de
em Saúde Reprodutiva e
Brasil



Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the WHO or the HRP.

University, Pakistan

University of Nairobi,
Kenya

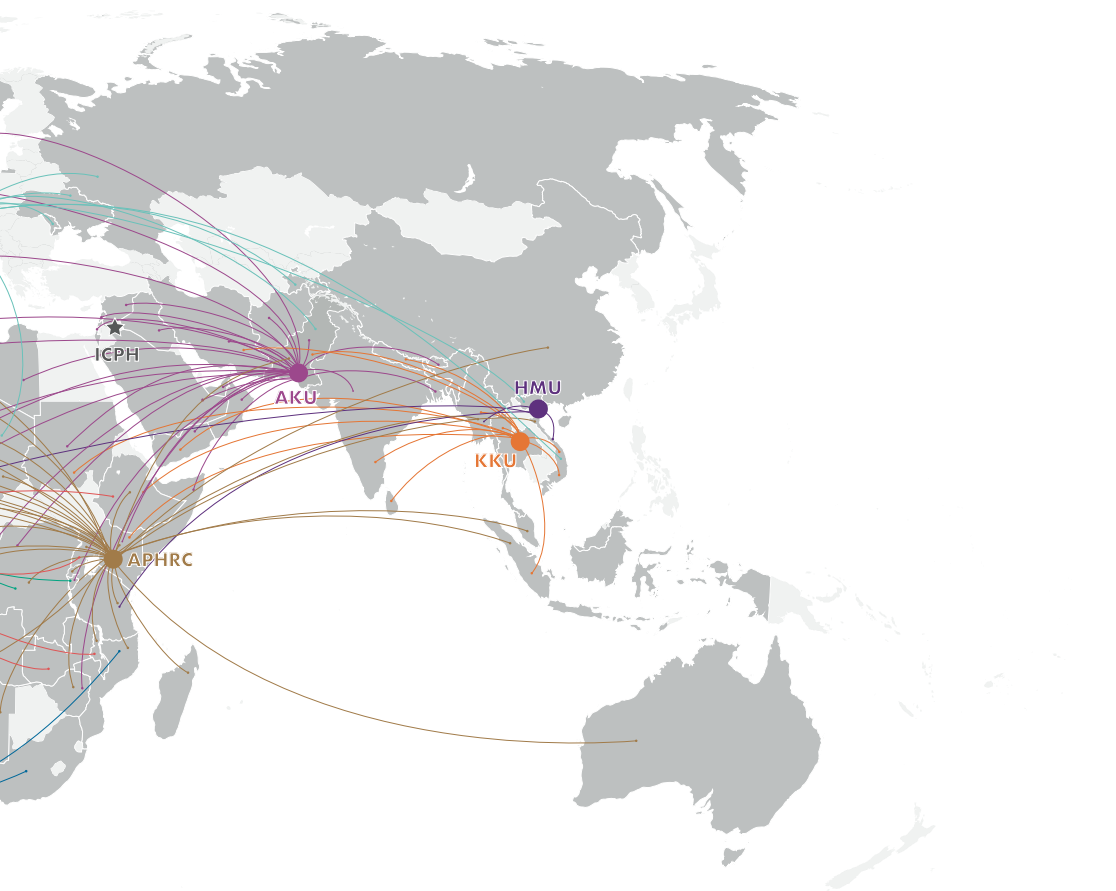
Universidade Federal de
Campinas,

HMU, Hanoi Medical University,
Viet Nam

IRSS, Institut de Recherche en
Sciences de la Santé, Burkina Faso

KKU, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

UGSPH, University of Ghana School of
Public Health, Ghana



A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

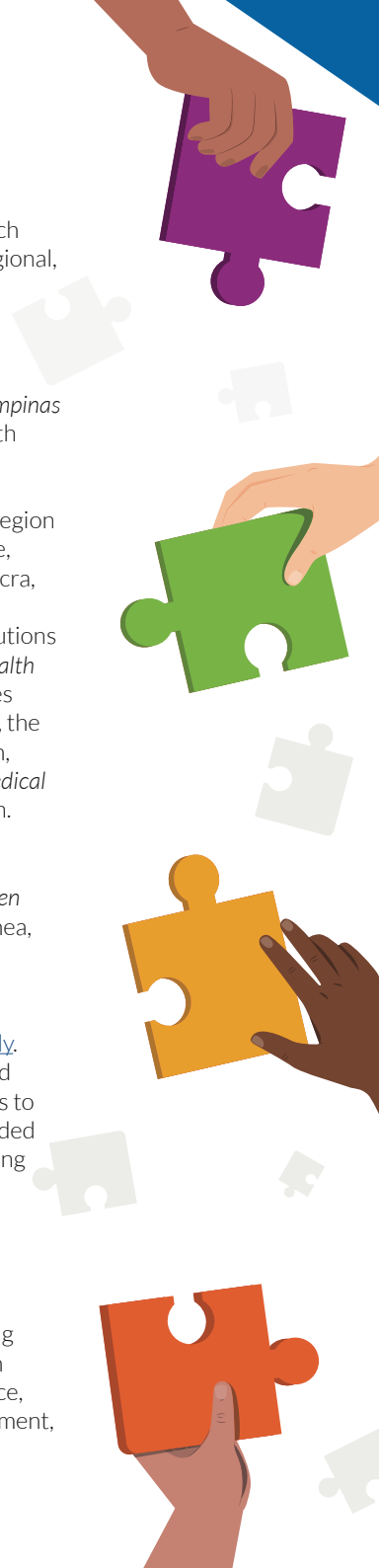
HRP Alliance hubs work primarily with research collaborators (or spokes) in low- and middle-income countries. The hubs, which comprise the centre of the network, span the globe through regional, subregional, and global partnerships.

To ensure sustainability, [the hubs are placed within larger institutions](#). No two hubs are the same; they each have unique workplans. The *Centro de Pesquisas em Saúde Reprodutiva de Campinas* (CEMICAMP) in Campinas, Brazil, is a hub for the Americas, with specific outreach to other Lusophone countries elsewhere. In Africa, the *Institut de Recherche en Sciences de la Santé* (IRSS) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, covers the Francophone African region and other Francophone countries around the world. Meanwhile, the University of Ghana School of Public Health (UGSPH) in Accra, Ghana, and the *African Population and Health Research Centre* (APHRC) in Nairobi, Kenya, complement their support to institutions located in Anglophone Africa. The hub at the *Department for Health Sciences at Aga Khan University* (AKU) in Karachi, Pakistan, serves the Eastern Mediterranean region spanning countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. *Khon Kaen University* (KKU) in Khon Kaen, Thailand, serves Southeast Asia. And lastly, the hub at *Hanoi Medical University* (HMU) in Viet Nam covers the Western Pacific region.

The hubs also work collaboratively with long-term institutional development grantees of HRP based at the *Cellule de recherche en santé de la reproduction en Guinée* (CERREGUI) in Conakry, Guinea, and at the *Institute for Community and Public Health at Birzeit University* (ICPH) in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The [work and reach of the HRP Alliance have grown significantly](#). In the five years since its inception, the HRP Alliance established its leadership by providing institutional mentorship (by the hubs to spokes) and opportunities for fellowships. The hubs have extended scholarships to dozens of masters and doctoral students pursuing their full potential as researchers. They also provided training to thousands of individuals from research institutions, to which they return to apply their newly gained skills and further build institutional networks and collaboration.

Delve into the wide range of courses, which cover topics relating to dissemination, translation of knowledge, and building skills in scientific writing. They include training on gender-based violence, quantitative and qualitative research methods, project management, and research leadership.



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The HRP Alliance supports thousands of individuals and hundreds of institutions in becoming leaders in sexual and reproductive health and rights research.



New initiatives are strengthening the network. In 2021, the HRP Alliance launched a [global mentorship programme for early career women researchers](#), partnering mentees with mentors in an effort to support women in the early stages of their professional development. This community of future leaders of sexual and reproductive health and rights research continues to grow, bolstering the strong network of programme alumni.

Overall, the HRP Alliance has become integral in SRHR research partnerships. HRP partners participate in research priority-setting, supporting research implementation, and catalyzing the translation of research results into policy.

In recent years, the HRP Alliance has sustained support to its partners, despite the pandemic. For example, HRP Alliance hubs played a key role in generating evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on health systems, contraception and abortion care, and among pregnant and recently pregnant women. Learn more about these initiatives and the network's efforts to respond to emerging health needs, from the Zika virus epidemic, the [migration crisis](#) in the Americas, and the dearth of information regarding sexual practices.

SMALL IMPACT GRANTS FOR EMERGING HEALTH NEEDS

Outbreaks and other emerging health needs require fast action to save lives. They are also reminders that high-quality evidence is critical for shaping real-time public health responses.

In collaboration with partners, the [HRP Alliance has funded multiple projects](#) that underpin policy action; for example, joint open calls for community-based research proposals on health emergencies during the Zika virus outbreak in 2016 and the mass migration crisis in the Americas in 2019. Further to outbreaks, another open call was announced in 2020 for the testing of a global tool on sexual behaviours. These collaborations allow for the emergence of new localized evidence from around the world using principles of implementation research and the development of new partnerships.

RESPONDING TO THE ZIKA VIRUS EPIDEMIC

To understand the impact of the Zika virus on communities and provide timely evidence for policy formulation, the HRP Alliance embarked on a collaboration with TDR and the Pan American Health Organization. The partnership supported 12 research groups in conducting studies using qualitative and quantitative methods, including geospatial techniques, to understand the impact of the epidemic and help shape policy response.

The results of the research were collated in a special supplement, [published in early 2020](#).



SHINING A LIGHT ON MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

The sharp increase in migration from Venezuela and Central America required better understanding. In response, the HRP Alliance joined TDR, AHPSR, the Pan American Health Organization, and the hub in Brazil to support locally-led research and embedded research capacity strengthening.

An open call for proposals resulted in 11 research teams exploring the barriers and facilitators to sexual and reproductive health and rights services for migrants. A special series presenting the findings from [the studies](#) was published in early 2023.

DEVELOPING A GLOBAL TOOL FOR INFORMATION GATHERING ON SEXUAL PRACTICES

A dearth of comparable information on sexual behaviours, attitudes, and practices initiated a multi-step process for collating information on knowledge gaps. A hackathon hosted by the HRP Alliance hub in Kenya led to the creation of a draft tool for information gathering and the subsequent testing of this tool using cognitive interviewing.

Through an open call for proposals, research teams from 19 countries were supported to [test the tool](#). Findings from the cognitive testing will result in a globally applicable and adaptable tool for the general population.



TACKLING COVID-19

Collaborating closely with WHO, HRP Alliance hubs proved essential to the COVID-19 research response. Through rapid and effective networking with HRP Alliance partners early in the pandemic, COVID-19 research collaborations were quickly established. Hubs developed and implemented HRP research related to the impact of the pandemic on [health systems](#), [pregnancy and COVID-19](#), and [experiences with contraceptive and abortion care](#) during the pandemic and beyond.

EMPOWERING POTENTIAL



[Rachidatou Compaoré](#) wants to care for and improve children's health. The medical researcher at the Institut de Recherche en Sciences de la Santé (IRSS) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, is accomplishing her goals. Data on seasonal malaria accumulated by Compaoré, who aspired to be a paediatrician, proved critical to a landmark nationwide strategy for preventing outbreaks of the deadly virus.

Compaoré's achievement is the culmination of her decade-long commitment to strengthen her capacity for research and exemplifies the impact of the HRP Alliance. Empower individuals so they may support institutions and communities and help them thrive.

Compaoré's journey with the HRP Alliance began in 2017 when IRSS awarded her a scholarship to pursue a doctoral degree. Subsequently, Compaoré contributed to two HRP-led studies with potentially enormous impact. The first was the [WHO multi-country study on abortion-related complications](#), which was the basis for her doctoral dissertation. The second research work was a [qualitative study](#) exploring the lasting effects on the research capacity of study teams who participated in another WHO multi-country study.

Findings from her studies have contributed to the body of evidence on abortion-related complications in Africa and used to advocate for deliberate capacity building, both for individuals and institutions.





Due to the HRP Alliance's focus on building a critical mass of researchers at the country and regional level, individuals like Compaoré are cornerstones of HRP Alliance endeavours. Strong researchers make for strong research institutions, and vice versa.

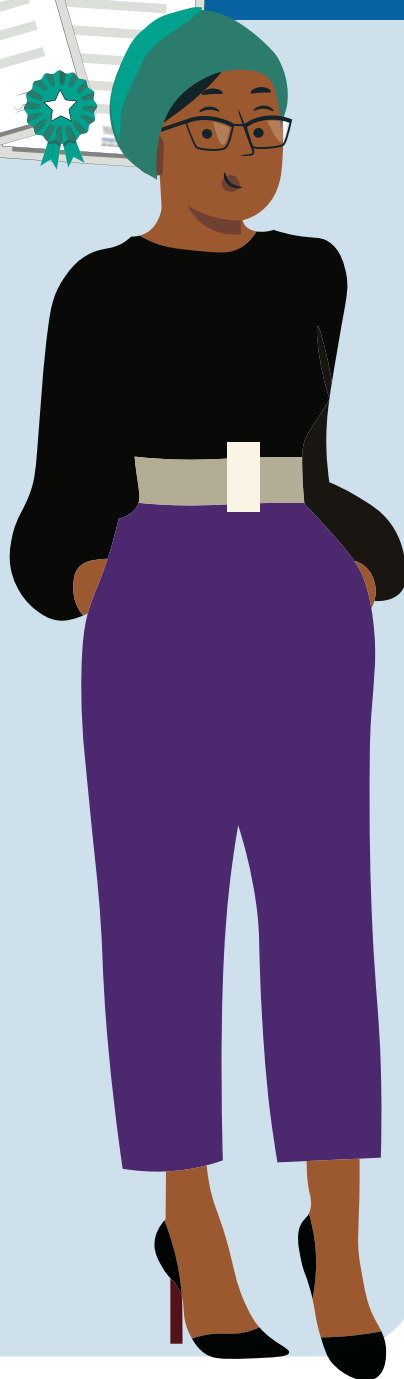
Compaoré's success has not been without struggle. There were times when the climb seemed too arduous. "It has come with a lot of sacrifice."

That is why it is critical to support future leaders like Compaoré. Gender inequalities too often reduce the career possibilities for women researchers. Addressing these gaps is a priority for the HRP Alliance. The global community cannot afford to lose these future leaders. With this in mind, the HRP Alliance also provides specific mentorship to early career female scientists.

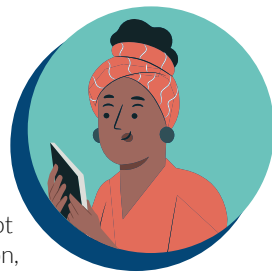
When the support is matched with perseverance on the part of scholarship recipients, the potential is boundless. "I want to climb the professional ladder, both in the sub-region and international level," says Compaoré. "There are not a lot women in positions of leadership, but we need this."

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PARTNERING FOR EQUITABLE RESEARCH



The HRP Alliance, as a partnership that brings together research institutions, WHO country and regional offices, WHO Collaborating Centres, TDR and AHPSR, fosters an environment supportive of research in sexual and reproductive health and rights, with a focus on implementation research.

For Example, the Alliance in collaboration with TDR and AHPSR developed a theory of change for implementation research and a framework that outlines core competencies required for strengthening research capacity to ensure alignment across efforts. In addition, the programmes have worked with other WHO regional and country offices to support research responding to [emerging health issues](#), such as the Zika virus epidemic and migration crises.

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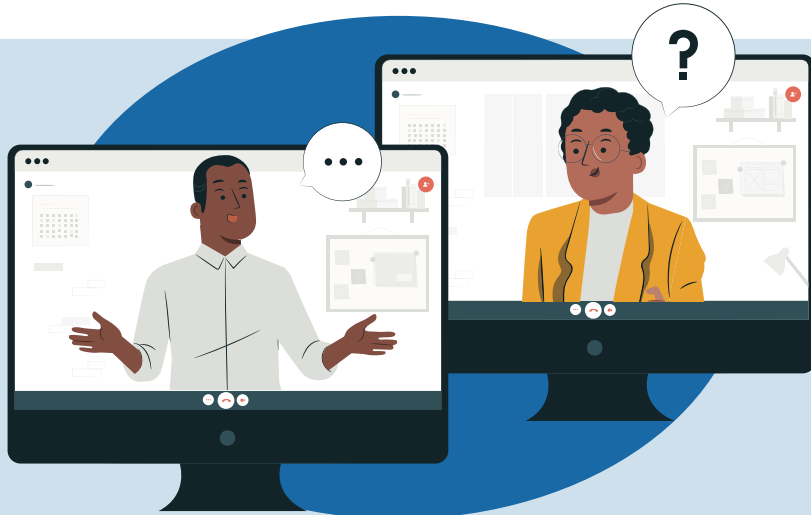
AS SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS RESEARCHERS, RECIPIENTS OF HRP ALLIANCE SUPPORT ARE LEADING THE WAY TOWARDS MORE EQUITABLE RESEARCH.

The imbalance in research capacity across countries impacts the health of communities around the world. Structural power imbalances in global health create barriers to participation as equals, especially for researchers in low- and middle-income countries. Power imbalances contribute to limited ownership over global health research that directly concerns their communities. Gender inequalities further impede opportunities to strengthen research capacity among women.

These inequalities prompt the HRP Alliance to action, for example, through investments in mentorship for early career women researchers. The programme has proven to be “transformative” as it expands collaboration. Through the HRP Alliance, HRP and TDR also collaborate to offer resources and training on the integration of sex and gender in health research. This pursuit for equitable research and research outputs has prompted HRP and the HRP Alliance to advocate for early career and junior researchers, including women, to lead and author publications resulting from their work,

Recognizing the barriers presented by scant opportunities for research leadership and funding, the HRP Alliance also extends financial support and training to develop proposals, implement studies, and disseminate findings. Through scholarships and engagement with the HRP Alliance, fellows have the chance to lead and participate in global health research - to the benefit of communities around the world.

Furthermore, collaborations with the hubs and WHO Collaborating Centres enable the HRP Alliance to develop research opportunities through grant proposals and fellowship opportunities for junior researchers. The system enables the researchers to respond to specific institutional development needs and foster a network of researchers in their regions and subregions.



MENTORING AND LONG-LASTING CONNECTIONS

To support women researchers in advancing their careers and becoming leaders in their field, the HRP Alliance initiated a [mentorship programme](#) in 2020. The programme's two initial cohorts engaged 56 individuals - some participating as mentors both years and mentees who returned to become mentors the second time around.

The programme has created lasting friendships and relationships. In the words of Theopista Fokukora, a university lecturer and HRP fellow, mentees have built their principles "in terms of support, influence (especially our own selves), development (a two-way approach of self and others), and opportunities for collaboration, growth and development."

The programme has been life-changing for Princess Ruhama Acheampong, a university lecturer and post-doctoral fellow from Ghana. Acheampong benefited from the sharper focus she acquired during the mentorship programme. "My mentor recognized my

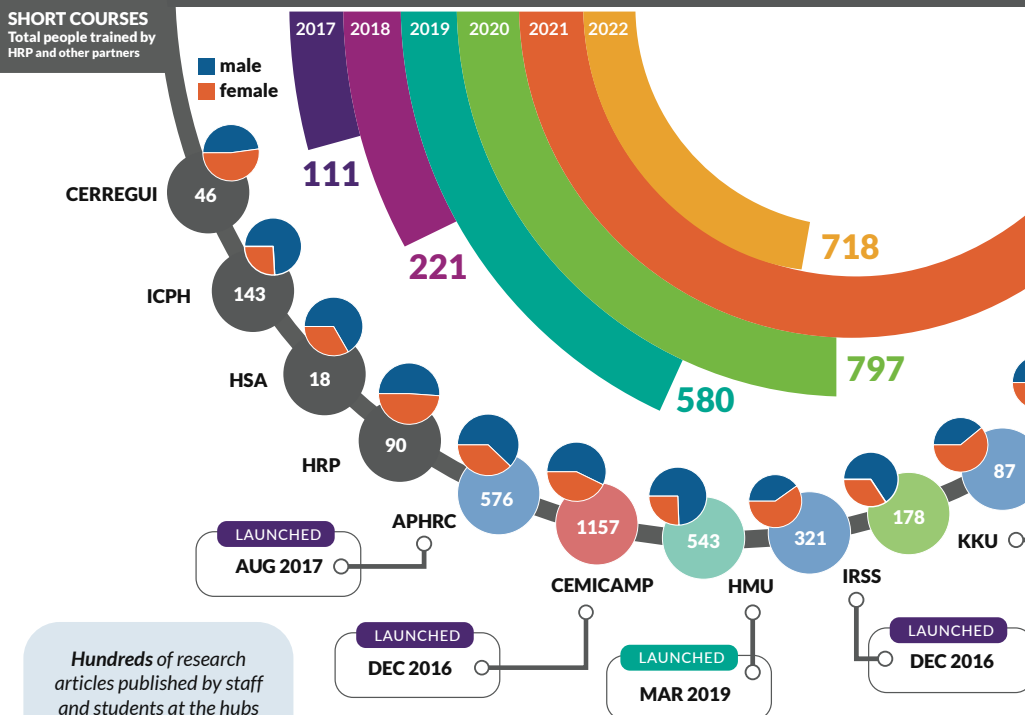
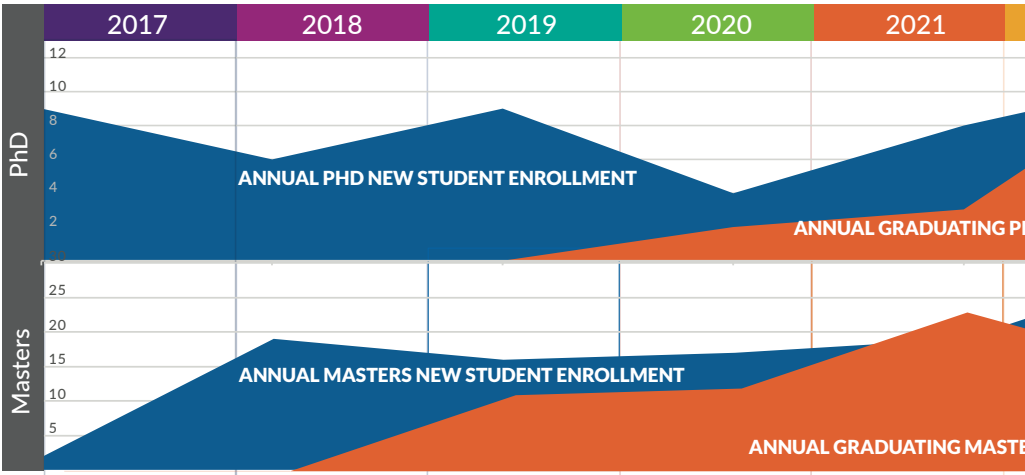
zeal for research at a time when I really needed a programme like this, helping me to prioritize," explained Acheampong.

Another welcome by-product: networking. Acheampong's connection with other mentees became both personal and professional. With her colleagues, Acheampong worked on a grant proposal to study potentially higher uptake of maternal health services in Ghana, Nepal, and Pakistan.

Mentees and mentors alike have benefited from the programme. Two participants replicated the mentorship model or incorporated concepts from the programme into their work in their respective research institutions.

[The programme](#) reflects on its experiences and adapts to the needs of individual participants. It learns from the past and changes as needed. Support the HRP Alliance as it builds its positive impact on women researchers across institutions.

WHAT 5 YEARS OF STRENGTHENING RESEARCH CAPACITY LOOKS LIKE



Hundreds of research articles published by staff and students at the hubs due to the research capacity strengthening efforts.

CERREGUI - Cellule de recherche en santé de la reproduction en Guinée, Guinée, **ICPH** - Institute occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) **HSA** - Health Services Academy, Islamabad, Pakistan, **HRP** - HAKU - Aga Khan University, Pakistan, **APHRC** - African Population and Health Research Centre, Kenya, Reprodutiva de Campinas, Brazil, **HMU** - Hanoi Medical University, Viet Nam, **IRSS** - Institut de Recherche en Santé, Khon Kaen University, Thailand, **UGSPH** - University of Ghana School of Public Health, Ghana



2022

48

to complete their doctoral degrees on topics relating to SRHR research priorities.

PHD STUDENTS

116

individuals have been supported by the HRP Alliance to complete their master's degrees

MASTERS STUDENTS

3627

participants from countries have received training through short courses offered by the HRP Alliance.

86

110

1200

3627
Total

LAUNCHED

FEB 2019

AKU

LAUNCHED

MAY 2017

UGSPH

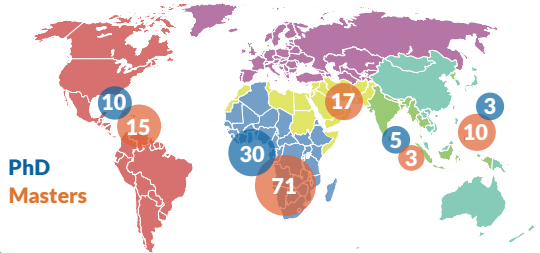
LAUNCHED

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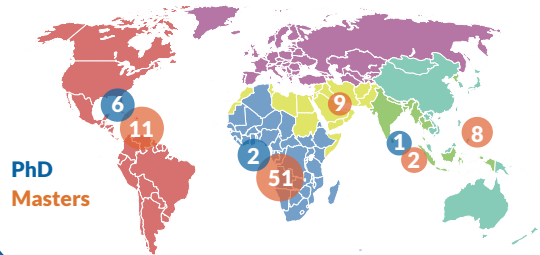
of Community and Public Health, West Bank, Human Reproduction Programme, Switzerland, Kenya. **CEMICAMP** - Centro de Pesquisas em Saúde, Universidade de Brasília, Brazil. **ICR** - Institut de Recherche en Sciences de la Santé, Burkina Faso, Kenya

By WHO region

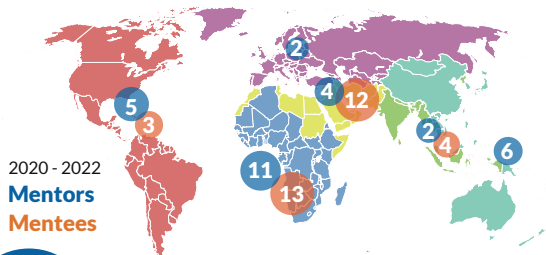
CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT



CUMULATIVE GRADUATES



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN FOR MENTORS & MENTEEES



56

unique individuals participated in the year-long mentorship programme for early-career female researchers. Individuals were matched into mentor-mentee pairs selected from HRP Alliance partner institutions located in low and middle-income countries were supported

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HRP Alliance

The HRP Alliance supports the strengthening of research capacity in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and creates synergies by linking research and capacity strengthening with HRP research.

The network capitalizes on access to global SRHR research and knowledge transfer, through grants and targeted support for research initiatives and training.



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hrpalliance@who.int

[HRP Alliance - Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research \(SRH\)](#)

