

Global Health Research discussed at the University of Victoria

On April 24th a workshop was held at the Centre for Global Studies (CFGS) to explore the idea of creating an informal network of University of Victoria (U.Vic) colleagues who share an interest in health-related global research, and to learn more about the Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research (CCGHR), of which U.Vic is an institutional member. Adjunct professor Vic Neufeld provided some relevant CCGHR updates.

The twelve (12) participants came from a variety of departments, schools and centres, and included four students (trainees) and two CFGS staff members. Individual participants described their work and interests in health-related global research. Working in smaller discussion groups, participants considered these questions:

- *WHY is an informal network needed? What gap or challenge does it address?*
- *WHAT would be the activities of such a network and what would be the next steps?*

Several important issues emerged from the discussions:

- While there are “pockets” of interest in the field of global health research, there is no strong health entity in the university, and there is no obvious “champion”;
- However, the CFGS could serve a convening function for an interest group, given that one of its goals is “*promoting and facilitating leading-edge research, including collaborative and interdisciplinary research*”.
- Given that research on global issues requires a trans-disciplinary approach, there are several U.Vic examples of groups that are “boundary-crossers” (for example, the “human dimensions of climate change”, POLIS, Borders in Globalization and others). There is a need and an opportunity to link Inter-disciplinary research groups in the social sciences, with those in the natural sciences—around a shared interest (theme, challenge). It was suggested that the theme -- an “eco-social” approach to global health and human development, could be such a bridge. In fact, this could become a U.Vic “niche” in the wider global health research community. Eventually a course on this theme, including the skills of knowledge brokering, could be created.

Workshop participants agreed on the following actions:

1. The CFGS will serve a convening function for further activities of this group.
2. A symposium series was proposed on the theme of “Global Health and Development”, drawing upon the available expertise and experience of U.Vic’s various inter-disciplinary groups, specifically taking the opportunity to bring together groups from the social and natural sciences. Three symposia—one in each semester, are proposed for the coming academic year.
3. A list-serve of researchers interested in global health and development could be created, to facilitate further knowledge sharing ¹

¹ For further information, including a list of workshop participants and the CCGHR presentation, please contact Jodie Walsh at: Jodie@uvic.ca, or 250-721-7400