GROW: a model for mentorship to advance women's leadership in global health.

Kathryn Yount, Emory University
S. Miedema, Emory University
K. H. Krause, Emory University
Cari Clark, Emory University
Jing Chen, Emory University
Carlos Del Rio, Emory University

Journal Title: Global Health, Epidemiology and Genomics
Volume: Volume 3, Number e5
Publisher: Cambridge University Press (CUP): Creative Commons | 2018-02-22, Pages 1-6
Type of Work: Article | Final Publisher PDF
Publisher DOI: 10.1017/gheg.2018.5
Permanent URL: https://pid.emory.edu/ark:/25593/sqdrh

Final published version: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/gheg.2018.5

Copyright information:
© The Author(s) 2018
This is an Open Access work distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Accessed October 28, 2020 4:12 PM EDT
In this essay, we discuss the under-representation of women in leadership positions in global health (GH) and the importance of mentorship to advance women’s standing in the field. We then describe the mentorship model of GROW, Global Research for Women. We describe the theoretical origins of the model and an adapted theory of change explaining how the GROW model for mentorship advances women’s careers in GH. We present testimonials from a range of mentees who participated in a pilot of the GROW model since 2015. These mentees describe the capability-enhancing benefits of their mentorship experience with GROW. Thus, preliminary findings suggest that the GROW mentorship model is a promising strategy to build women’s leadership in GH. We discuss supplemental strategies under consideration and next steps to assess the impact of GROW, providing the evidence to inform best practices for curricula elsewhere to build women’s leadership in GH.

Received 22 December 2017; Revised 17 February 2018; Accepted 2 March 2018

Key words: Global health, Global Research for Women (GROW), mentorship, policy and society, women’s empowerment, women’s leadership.
representation in the ranks of GH leadership. Equality in formal representation means having the same opportunities as men to participate in leadership, without discrimination based on gender or other intersecting identities. Equality in descriptive representation means that women are represented in equal numbers in positions of leadership. Equality in substantive representation means that women’s interests are advocated in decision-making circles. Emerging evidence suggests that women need to be in leadership to have their interests represented [11, 12].

Call to action and role of women’s mentorship networks

The recent inaugural Women Leaders in Global Health (WLGH) conference established principles to advance women’s leadership in GH. Recommended strategies included increasing the visibility of women by ensuring gender balance in all spheres of academia, nominating and promoting women for important committees and awards, advocacy for a culture that values work-life integration, eliminating gender gaps in pay, cultivating thought leadership among women professionals, addressing data gaps that mask persistent gender disparities in leadership, and promoting accountability. One strategic priority of the WLGH Initiative includes mentorship for women’s leadership in GH.

GROW empowerment model for mentoring women leaders in global health

Given this ambitious agenda, models for mentorship are needed to position women for leadership in GH [3, 4]. Mentorship can be a powerful tool to enhance the capabilities of individual women and to strengthen their collective capabilities to advance in the ranks. Our focus on mentoring to enhance capabilities differs from the typical psychosocial and professional outcomes that feature in the mentoring literature [13, 14]. Enhancing individual and collective capabilities are essential to empower women for leadership in GH.

Here, we describe the theory of change and present pilot data for the mentorship model, Global Research for Women (GROW). GROW is an interdisciplinary, global initiative to catalyze empowerment, health, and freedom from violence for women and girls globally. Our guiding principle is that women’s and girls’ empowerment is a pillar of sustainable development and is inextricably linked with their health and freedom from violence. Our strategic priorities are to advance scholarship, to cultivate leadership, and to generate dialogue that catalyzes social change through evidence-based policies, programs, and collective action for women’s and girls’ empowerment.

Inclusive with all women and with men, the GROW mentorship model is adapted from a theory for women’s empowerment developed by feminist economist, Naila Kabeer [15]. We define women’s empowerment in GH as the process by which women acquire new human, economic, and social resources, which enable them to exercise agency, or the capacity to make strategic life choices to enhance their professional development in a context in which these capabilities were once denied. Below, we describe the components of this empowerment-based mentorship model to advance women’s careers in GH (Fig. 1).

Expanding human resources involves advanced theoretical and methodological training enabling scholars to acquire new knowledge and skills in subfields of GH; opportunities to lead and to co-author publications with our global network of affiliates; in-country practicums to build field experience; guidance on how to build effective teams for...
research, practice, or advocacy; discussions on emotional intelligence, including skills to negotiate on one’s own behalf and to manage professional conflicts; and training on ethical principles for robust work in GH.

Investing economic resources includes advocacy for undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate scholarships; recommendations for prominent internal and external fellowships, awards, and positions; mentorship on grant writing; opportunities to participate on externally funded team projects at all stages of career; and financial support to attend and to present at professional conferences.

Expanding social resources includes integration into inter-disciplinary, project-based teams and peer groups to build collaborations; exposure to formal and informal professional networks; opportunities to attend professional conferences; introductions to professionals with similar career interests; and in-country internships to deepen global networks. Social resources also include the amplification of accomplishments via the media, including press releases, webinars, newsletters (http://www.growemory.org/archives), blogs (http://www.growemory.org/growblog), and social-media posts.

Agency is an intermediate outcome that may arise from the above enabling resources. Agency encompasses an intrinsic belief in one’s capabilities, the strategic enactment of one’s aspirations or preferences, and the collective action of women to advance women’s leadership in GH. Intrinsic agency, or power within, entails the development of self-confidence, self-efficacy, and a critical awareness of one’s professional worth and potential contributions. Instrumental agency, or power to, entails the enactment of strategic, or meaningful, decisions that advance one’s career. Collective agency, or power with, entails a group’s shared belief in its joint capabilities to organize and to execute mutually agreed actions for shared achievements. More than the sum of individual agencies, collective agency emerges from the interactive, coordinated, and synergistic dynamics of the group [16].

Intrinsic and instrumental agency, as individual-level outcomes of mentoring, are rarely examined in mentoring models [13, 17]. Collective agency has never been conceptualized or measured as an outcome of network-based models for mentoring. Through these pathways, GROW leverages the achievements of women leaders in GH to benefit women at all career stages.

Next steps

Our pilot data suggest that the GROW model to build women’s leadership in GH is promising. GROW strategies continue to evolve as we recognize, build up, and realize the potential for women’s leadership in GH, inclusive of all women in this field. Our team is surveying masters-of-public-health and mid-career fellows alumni to assess, using the GROW model, (1) the human, economic, and social resources that men and women received during their usual training and (2) the associations of these resources with the measures of career-related intrinsic and instrumental agency and with acquiring a leadership position in GH. This survey will enable us to select additional content to further the leadership capabilities of women in GH. We expect that post-graduate leadership training and on-going career mentoring will be a promising supplemental strategy. If the survey findings corroborate our expectations, we will design a supplemental program and conduct a randomized-controlled trial to compare the empowerment processes and career trajectories of women graduates randomly selected for the program, vs. women graduates randomly selected for usual training only and all male graduates in the same cohorts who receive usual training. A favorable causal impact of the program would guide best practices for all Departments of Global Health to modify and to supplement their graduate curricula in ways shown causally to enhance women’s leadership in GH.
**Table 1. Testimonials of the impact of GROW mentorship on the capabilities for leadership in global health**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain of women’s empowerment</th>
<th>Testimonial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Human resources             | ‘The GROW network is a fantastic place for like-minded scholars to collaborate and develop research. Many of the members of the GROW team have helped to foster a greater understanding of new methods of global research while encouraging thinking that will lead to impactful projects.’
|                             | ‘The website itself is a treasure trove of resources on women’s health, gender empowerment, and especially relevant to me as an academic who studies gender-based violence, the breadth and depth of research in cutting-edge practice is an intellectually stimulating environment.’ |
| Economic resources          | ‘I wanted to thank you again for your support in my attendance at the 2017 Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality (SSSS) conference where I was able to co-present the continuation of my thesis work… It was a wonderful experience and I am very glad I had the opportunity to listen in on some very mind-opening seminars on sexual violence and sexual and reproductive health.’
|                             | ‘As a master’s student and GROW member, I received a range of financial, scholastic, and professional support. To finance my summer practicum abroad, I worked closely with two senior members of GROW…[who] mentored me as I drafted a Global Field Experience (GFE) funding proposal, by sharing examples from their previous work, walking me through proposal norms in the public health discipline, helping me clarify my funding goals, and reviewing my proposal. Ultimately, I submitted a successful proposal that largely funded my practicum experience… I had funds to support my student job with GROW [and] these same GROW members submitted letters of recommendation on my behalf, including for my current position at a large international organization…’ |
| Social resources            | ‘The mentorship I received, particularly through GROW network, encouraged me as public health professional to stay involved in research by building relationships that extended beyond my time at Rollins. The community deepened my understanding of what it means to belong to a research group by helping me to effectively build connections, share my own work, and exchange ideas in new and meaningful ways. These are all things that I have carried with me into my new role.’
|                             | ‘I think the way that GROW has influenced my work has been to connect me as a single, young, early career social scientist, with other more established people across this field for me to think through my research questions, to think through my research methods, to really critically analyze where my research is needed, how it’s needed, and how I can go about implementing my ideas.’
|                             | ‘…you lead by example when you promote other women’s work. You devote time to building up other researchers…in an academic environment that can otherwise be very cut-throat. I recall … a long talk… about taking ownership of my work … It was clear that that was part of a larger message that you were trying to convey about our role in academia, with its clear power dynamics. I am not sure how one would describe or classify that type of leadership, but I know that I have appreciated it!’ |
| Intrinsic agency            | ‘I was better prepared for my current faculty position and felt more confidence going into this position (assistant professor at [University] department of Health Science) due to the mentoring and experiences I had…’
|                             | ‘Without GROW, it is unlikely I would have the depth and diversity of the hard and soft professional skills I use in my current opportunity…My GROW mentorship bolstered my professional skills and confidence.’ |
| Instrumental agency         | ‘I was further benefited by the opportunity to work with a team of colleagues on a variety of papers. Together we discussed the most important research questions to ask, problem solved challenges, and collaborated on completing projects. This environment prepared me for developing new collaborations and research projects…I also appreciated the informal discussions that I had…about negotiating faculty contracts and the added challenges that women sometimes face.’
|                             | ‘Further, my past GROW experiences shape the day-to-day choices I make about my current research – whether I am anticipating challenges enumerators might face in the field, structuring an interview guide, or mediating conflict between project partners.’ |
| Collective agency           | ‘What I like about GROW is that it connects interdisciplinary scholars together, and we learn a lot from each other, whether it be global health, public health, nursing, medicine.’
|                             | ‘Being embedded in a network that fosters respectful, mutually beneficial cross-national and cross-cultural collaboration has amplified the impact of my work and my contribution to teams that share my commitment to women’s health and empowerment.’

(Continued)
Excerpts include testimonies from women and one man mentee of GROW.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Dr. Michelle Lampl, Director of the Center for the Study of Human Health, and Ms. Agnes Mackintosh, Associate Director of Program Innovations and Development at the Center for the Study of Human Health, for providing data on the gender distribution of undergraduate minors in Global Health at Emory University.

References


