

Global Health Watch

**Mobilising health and social justice movements
around an *alternative* World Health Report**

Introduction

Global civil society does not participate strongly and consistently in international health advocacy. Whilst there have been some high-profile successes due to pressure from civil society, (for example with campaigns to improve access to medicines and to regulate the promotion of infant formula), there is a striking lack of involvement and pressure from civil society on broad health and health systems issues.

With the failure of the global community to achieve “Health for All by the Year 2000”, new targets - such as the Millennium Development Goals – have come to the fore. However, whilst overseas development assistance levels stagnate, and the trade and investment environment become even more unfriendly to poor countries, there is a likelihood that these targets too will not be met, increasing cynicism and discontent in the world. Growing disparities in health care consumption between the rich and the poor add a significant political and moral dimension to the global state of poor health.

Instead, a fragmented, disease- and issue-specific approach to health dominates advocacy as well as research and governance agendas, under-emphasising the underlying causes of ill-health. In addition, the values that underpin the goal of health equity are often undermined by development policies emphasising efficiency at the expense of fairness; market forces at the expense of planning based on population needs; and selective approaches to disease-eradication at the expense of comprehensive strategies for promoting health. In addition, the diminished capacity and role of national governments and the public sector, particularly in poor countries, has further undermined the notion of social solidarity and democratic governance.

Although there has been a recent and welcome shift by the World Health Organisation to highlight global inequity and reassert the principles of the Primary Health Care Approach, constant pressure from civil society is needed to hold national policy-makers and international organizations accountable to declared values. To be effective, civil society voices must be well informed, evidence-based, and united on fundamental issues.

The People’s Health Movement, with the support of the Global Equity Gauge Alliance and Medact, propose to mobilise a fragmented global health community around the production of an *alternative* world health report and around an explicit set of values and principles.

The vehicle for this is the **Global Health Watch**, which will:

- Amplify the calls for a broad, multi-sectoral approach to health by explicitly and concretely linking health concerns to the environment, international finance, economic justice, agriculture and food security, war, housing, land rights, conflict and education.
- Shift the health policy agenda away from technocratic approaches, to one that also recognises the political, social and economic barriers to better and more equitable health.
- Promote human rights as the basis for health policy, as a corrective to the market-led policy agenda which tends to fragment and exclude.
- Strengthen the capacity of the world's global health institutions to provide technical and value-based leadership in the struggle to attain adequate health for all.
- Improve civil society's capacity to hold to account, the actions of rich nation governments, the global international financial institutions and relevant trans-national corporations.
- Strengthen the links between socially conscious non-government and civil society organisations different parts of the world on the basis of shared values.
- Provide a forum for magnifying the voice of the poor and vulnerable and those who advocate for them.

The structure and regular production of an alternative world health report

The Global Health Watch will be embodied by an alternative world health report that is written to support civil society's capacity to promote a more socially conscious and equitable health agenda. The report will serve as a forum for civil society perspectives, testimonies from the ground and the voices of people who are traditionally unheard. The broad themes that will be covered by the various chapters of the GHW 2005 report are listed below, and will be written by a collective of authors from various regions of the world.

Section A: The politics and economics of health in the era of globalisation

Section B: Health care sector

- Social, political and economic approaches to health and health care
- Big pharma, access to medicines and IPRs
- Human resources: the lifeblood of health systems
- Responding to HIV/AIDS
- Gene technology and the attainment of health for all

Section C: Beyond health care

- Environmental challenges
- Militarism and conflict
- Water
- The right to food: Land, agriculture and household food security
- Education

Section D: Special Chapter focussed on marginalised groups

- Indigenous peoples
- Disabled **people**

Section E: Institution Watching

- WHO report card
- World Bank report card
- G8, debt cancellation and ODA quantity and quality report card
- WTO / GATS / trade agreement report card

Section F: Summary and Strategies for Action

Using the report to advance better health for all

In addition to the production of a report, the Watch embodies an advocacy goal. This includes popularising and legitimising various core messages centred around equity and the importance of effective and inclusive public health systems; the centrality of public sector leadership in the health sector; and the need for the political, social and economic determinants of health to receive greater recognition in both global and national policy forums.

It also means encouraging a more vigorous role for civil society to monitor and hold to account officials, politicians and the private sector as required, as well as encouraging greater involvement of civil society organisations in the determination of international health policy, with a particular emphasis on strengthening representation of the poor and their advocates.

How can you get involved

It is hoped that the Watch will be used as a catalyst for the development and strengthening of existing campaigns around the world to improve the health of the poor. The Watch aims to involve civil society networks, organisations and individuals from developing and developed countries.

Regional and national groups are being encouraged to publicise the principle of an alternative world health report, and to develop their own accompanying national and regional watches.

We are still looking for participation from interested individuals and organisations. You can help us by:

- Endorsing the Report
- Creating demand for the Global Health Watch in your region
- Launching the Report in your region
- Initiating local national and regional Health Watches
- Submitting testimonies and case studies
- Volunteering to help with technical reviews
- Funding

Coordination of the Watch

The GHW is being coordinated by three organisations:

The *People's Health Movement* (PHM) is an organised network of civil society and grassroots organisations that developed out of the international gathering of the first People's Health Assembly in Bangladesh in December 2000. At that meeting, delegates from all over the world reaffirmed their commitment to the strengthening of health care systems that are equitable, sustainable and locally appropriate, as well as to the view that health is a human right.

Medact is a UK-based charity with a health professional membership that has been active in highlighting the harmful effects of globalisation, poverty, environmental degradation and war on health and equity.

The *Global Equity Gauge Alliance* (GEGA) is a network of projects mainly in the South that primarily addresses in-country health inequities. It has committed itself to tackling the global determinants of health disparities within and between countries.

Through the Global Health Watch, the three organisations intend to use the concept of an alternative world health report to promote the involvement of as many individuals and civil society organisations as possible. A coordinating committee consisting of academics, health activists and public health practitioners from twenty different regions of the world are already helping to shape and guide the strategic direction of the Global Health Watch.

A number of prominent NGOs and academics from other institutions have become centrally involved in the production of certain chapters. And in some areas, independent networks and initiatives are being catalysed to develop *alternative* regional and national health watches to accompany the Global Health Watch.

Contact details and information

Find out more, visit the Global Health Watch website- www.ghwatch.org

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