

## **Intersectoral Collaborations and the Social Determinants of Health**

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### **Abstract**

Social justice affects the way people live, the probability of getting sick and the risk of dying prematurely. Life expectancy and health status are strongly associated with the equity with which people, their families and communities access living conditions that favor well-being.

A child can expect to live more than 80 years in Sweden or Japan, in Brazil 72, in India 63 and in some African countries less than 50 years. Within the same country, the differences in relation to life expectancy can be enormous and reflect the world situation. In all countries, with health and disease they follow a social gradient: the lower the socioeconomic situation, the worse the health status. That does not have to be this way and it is not fair that it be so. It is unfair that there are systematic differences in the state of health, when these can be avoided by applying reasonable measures. That is what is called health inequity.

Health inequalities and inequality, which could be avoided, are the result of the situation in which the population grows, lives, works and ages, and the type of systems used to combat the disease. In turn, the conditions in which people live and die are determined by political, social and economic forces. Social and economic policies have decisive effects on the chances that a child will grow and develop his full potential, and have a prosperous life, or that it will not be possible.

The World Commission on Social Determinants of Health (WHO, 2008) drew attention to the importance of addressing social determinants of health and presented recommendations for action. The WHO Member States approved in 2012, an action agenda by adopting the Rio Political Declaration around a set of key functions. Since 2018, a renewed commitment from WHO to act on the determinants of health and health equity has emerged, which is reflected in the WHO General Work Program 2019-2023. Along with the above, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also underlines the importance of addressing social determinants.

The essential aspects that have been agreed with respect to an action on social determinants can only be achieved by generating alliances between all sectors (intersectoral action), ensuring that health is effectively in all policies. The main areas can be summarized in:

#### **1) Improve living conditions**

- Equity from the beginning: adequate nutrition, attachment and child protection, stimulation and quality education;
- Healthy environments for a healthy population: sanitation, urban planning for healthy environments, equity between rural and urban areas;

- Employment and decent work: safe, healthy, well-paid work, promoter of people's development, which balances work, family life and recreation.
- Universal social protection throughout life, especially in specific unexpected circumstances, such as illness, disability and loss of income or work.
- Universal health care

## 2) Fight against the unequal distribution of power. Money and resources

- The inequality of living conditions is determined by deeper social structures and processes. The inequalities are systematic and are the result of social norms, policies and practices that tolerate or even favor an unfair distribution of power, wealth and other necessary social resources, and access to them.
- Health equity in policies, systems and programs
- Equitable financing of social programs
- Market regulation of goods and services with important health consequences (such as tobacco, alcohol and food).
- Gender equality
- Allow civil society to organize and act in a way that promotes and respects political and social rights that affect health equity

## 3. Measure the magnitude of the problem, analyze it and evaluate the effects of the interventions

- Good information on basic data and health indicators
- Information on inequalities in social and economic matters
- Reliable information to assess vulnerable groups and areas
- Ability of countries to generate policies from the evidence
- Ability to measure the impact of social programs

All of the above will not be possible, but there is political will of governments, adequate forms of governance that strengthen democracy and social participation in the search for social pacts enable sustainable development models, which together with being friendly to the environment are made responsible for not leaving anyone behind and for making possible in an equitable way all conditions for a full and healthy life.