

Overcoming Obstacles to Improving Global Health in the 21st Century

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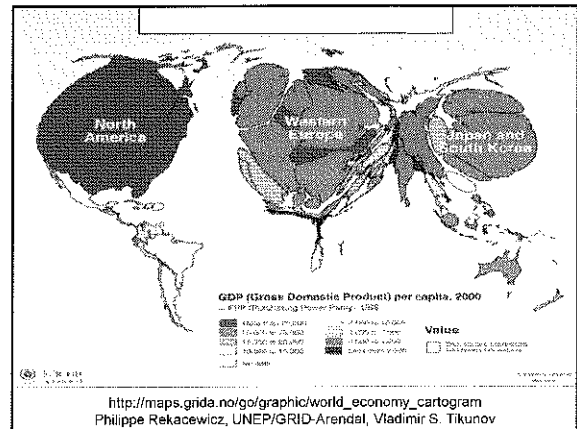
Based in part on
Benatar S R, Gill S, Balkler I C
International Affairs March 2009

Some Key Questions

- What is the state of global health?
- How can we explain this?
 - Underlying paradigm and values
- How can we overcome obstacles to improving global health?
- Who should be the focus of our attention?
- What can we hope to achieve?
- Do we have the resources?

State of Global Health?

- Disparities/inequities in health & access to health are widening globally
- Most health care 'systems' distorted, dysfunctional & unsustainable
- Changing patterns of disease: stress on health care systems
- Environmental degradation/climate change



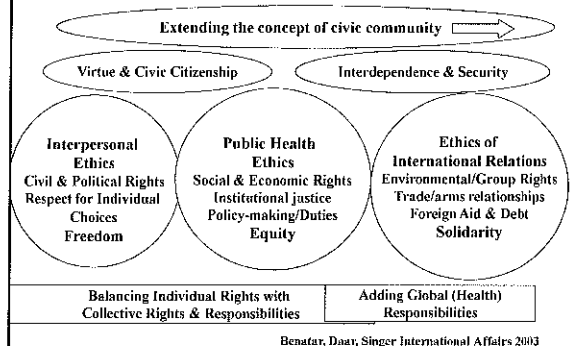
Underlying Paradigm/Values Understanding World Views/Belief Systems

- **Individualism/narrow conception of human rights**
 - Little attention to duties
- **Freedom as dominant value**
 - Institutions/corporations: market ideology
- **Faith in science as *the* solution to all problems**
 - Science necessary but not sufficient
- **Value of knowledge**
 - New valued > old & both valued > than wisdom
- **Self-interest**
 - Short term valued > long-term
- **Lack of solidarity/sense of global citizenship**

Overcoming these Obstacles

- **Academic discourse: wedge to progress**
 - Expand the discourses on ethics & human rights
- **Social activity: to change mindsets**
 - Engage in scholarly critique & popular education
- **Political action: to achieve paradigm shift**
- **Alternative Grand Challenges are required to achieve these goals**

Expanding the Discourses on Ethics & Human Rights



Belief Systems

Reasons for human action

- Self-interest
- Fear of doing otherwise
- Belief systems

Belief systems

- Mobilize feelings/wills through symbols & actions.
 - Symbols work most powerfully when unseen or unrecognized
- Are engines of social & moral continuity
 - Shape what people believe
 - Are important aspects of reality whether true or not

Social Activities Changing Mind-sets

- **Self-examination:**
 - our motives, our expectations against the above background
- **What do we value?**
 - with what opportunity costs do we pursue these?
- **Consider limits of medicine & of life**
 - recognize our mortality
- **Reconsider entitlements**
 - individuals & communities
- **Engage in new discourses**
 - Rights & Duties (reciprocal), Solidarity
- **New meaning of global security**
 - energy, water, competition for resources, marginalisation
- **Nature of the good life**
 - sustainable & with less inequality

Political Action

- **Develop social & economic policies in response to immediate challenges of global economic crisis**
 - New financing mechanisms for health/social cohesion
 - Promote sustainable economic recovery (Keynes, Galbraith)
- **Rethink social & economic policies in medium & long terms to promote healthier societies e.g.**
 - Tax base
 - Effective/prudent economic regulation
 - Re-vitalize public services: health/transport/education
 - Address over-consumption

Political Action New Paradigm

Old Paradigm

Relationships

- Exclusion/confrontation, domination/enmity

Diplomacy

- Adversarial/ intransigent, unilateral/vengeful/ exploitative

Power used to

- Maintain superiority through compulsion & punishment

Security based on

- Inequality/deterrence/coercion & national interests.

New Paradigm

Relationships

- Inclusion/détente
- engagement

Diplomacy

- Cooperative/compromising, multilateral/magnanimous/ reciprocal

Power used to

- Foster persuasion & reward internationally

Security pursued through

- Reassurance/cooperation on global scale

MeeGwfre Int Affairs 2001

Alternative Grand Challenges

- To improve human health by addressing inherently global issues
- To foster `best practices` models of integrated political, social & medical means of reducing social inequalities in health
- To improve nutrition to improve health

Anne-Emanuelle Birn. Lancet 2005; 366: 514-19

Grand Challenge Research Program

- Research program based on new approach to development (*Power, Production & Social Reproduction* (Bakker & Gill 2003))
 - Elaborate how more progressive, equitable/democratic frameworks can be imagined, theorized & manifested in policy
 - Break new ground in explaining how geopolitics, economics, constitutionalism & changing social institutions affect governance of social reproduction & human security
- Develop new methods of research through theoretical & methodological goals & empirical investigation
 - Analyze key aspects of development under present conditions
 - Explain how those conditions might change
 - Evaluate amenability to other changes through policy interventions.
- Integrate perspectives
 - Bring to light new/overlooked issues & inter-linkages
 - Refine/reformulate basic categories of analysis
- Comprehensive dissemination & outreach strategy

S Gill et al

Potential Scenarios for Global Health

- *Scenario 1:*
An increasingly unequal market-governed future
- *Scenario 2:*
Market governance with minimal redistribution
- *Scenario 3:*
Redistribution based on new paradigm of health and social development

Resources?

Reconsider priorities

- Allocation of \$17 trillion for `economic emergency funds`
- 22 X as much as pledged for MDGs (\$750 billion)
- \$15 billion /year needed by Global Fund

Redistribute

- Reduce tax evasion by companies & individuals
 - \$100 billion through secret banks in US alone
- New forms of taxation
 - \$1-5 tax on air tickets in 6 Euro countries raised \$700 million
 - 0.005% tax on currently untaxed \$800 trillion trade in foreign currency would raise > \$33 billion annually

New patterns of economic growth

- Trade rules
- Health impact fund
- Clean energy

Conclusions

- We know what the problems are
- We know what needs to be done
- Can we move along new pathways to improve global health?
- We have the potential to do so
- Somehow I doubt that we will
- BUT.....

Despair should not eclipse hope: “neither history nor legend encourages us to believe that a man who sits on his fellow will some day climb down on the basis of sounds reaching him from below. And yet we must consider how so much more dangerous our already very perilous world would become if the oppressed everywhere should despair altogether of invoking reason and humanity to arbitrate their cause.”

Chinua Achebe