




Background Reference Material to Conference Teaser

[One billion people lack access to health care systems](#)  [About 11 million children under the age of 5 die from malnutrition and mostly preventable diseases, each year. An estimated 17.5 million people died from CVDs in 2005, representing 30% of all global deaths. Over 80% of CVD deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.](#)  [There are 8.8 million new cases of Tuberculosis \(TB\) and 1.75 million deaths from TB, each year. 1.6 million people still die from pneumococcal diseases every year, making it the number one vaccine-preventable cause of death worldwide. More than half of the victims are children. Malaria causes more than 300 million acute illnesses and at least 1 million deaths, annually. More than half a million people, mostly children, died from measles in 2003. Cardiovascular diseases \(CVDs\) are the number one group of conditions causing death globally. An estimated 17.5 million people died from CVDs in 2005, representing 30% of all global deaths. Over 80% of CVD deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.](#) 

The World Health Organization (WHO) and others repeatedly point out that many of these diseases are “diseases of poverty.” However, some diseases are now not only the result of poverty, but have been contributing to poverty—In the case of malaria, for instance, the WHO notes that, malaria has significant measurable direct and indirect costs, and has recently been shown to be a major constraint to economic development. Annual economic growth in countries with high malaria transmission has historically been lower than in countries without malaria. Economists believe that malaria is responsible for a “growth penalty” of up to 1.3% per year in some African countries. [Economic costs of malaria](#), World Health Organization, accessed November 27, 2005.

“The greater the social disadvantage, the worse the health”, (p.31). . [Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health](#). The poorest of the poor, around the world, have the worst health. Those at the bottom of the distribution of global and national wealth, those marginalized and excluded within countries, and countries themselves disadvantaged by historical exploitation and persistent inequity in global institutions of power and policy-making present an urgent moral and practical focus for action. [Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health](#). see also Sir Michael Marmot explains why social, political and economic policies affect health. (Source: WHO. [Higher quality video](#).)

Those which are socially disadvantaged in low-income countries in addition to the considerable burden due to the effects of poverty are particularly vulnerability to natural disasters. Capacity for rapid, coordinated and multi sectoral risk management and response which includes humanitarian responses is a necessary capacity for national government, international and regional organization and development and humanitarian workers now and in the future. (Knight Centre for International Media, 2010) In the past five years, of the 40 countries at the bottom of the Human Development Index, 26 have experienced war or major natural disaster. For many of these countries, as they try to step forward, they are faced with dysfunctional social systems, infrastructure which is extremely weak or non existent. Major natural disasters, especially severe drought, floods and earthquakes will have an inequitable impact on those very same nations. Many have been internally displaced are thus place in higher risk living conditions or situations which make them more vulnerable to further natural disasters. www.worldmapper.org

A World Bank Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) report on almost \$18 billion worth of health, nutrition and population work covered projects from 1997 to 2008 across the World Bank Group. It rated 220 projects according to how well they met stated objectives, regardless of how good those objectives were. Highly satisfactory outcomes were almost unheard of, and only about two-thirds of projects had moderately satisfactory outcomes or better. Projects in Africa were “particularly weak”, with only 27 per cent achieving satisfactory outcomes. Overall only 29 per cent of freestanding HIV projects had satisfactory outcomes, falling to 18 per cent in Africa. This report notes that the Bank, despite these criticisms (and criticism for many, many years) is pushing for further privatization in health, education and water — [World Bank health work flawed; still pushing privatization of services](#), Bretton Woods Project, July 10, 2009

The recent report of a High Level Consultation of the World Health Organization in January 2009, suggest that the global financial crises has and will continue to have a further negative impact on global health. The response needs to be multi sectoral, seeking health gains through demonstrating the importance of health in all policies. It also calls for getting the balance right- the immediate and urgent responses, but maintaining essential curative services and sustaining preventive programmes. Bringing best and innovative practices needs to be strengthened, research, is not a luxury but a critical tool in developing the proper health response in crisis. www.who.int

In December 1991, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 46/182 ([click here](#) for English version - [click here](#) for all official languages), designed to strengthen the United Nations' response to both complex emergencies and natural disasters. In addition it aimed at improving the overall effectiveness of the UN's humanitarian operations in the field. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs mission is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors in order to alleviate human suffering in disasters and emergencies; advocate for the rights of people in need; promote preparedness and prevention; and, facilitate sustainable solutions. www.ochaonline.un.org

Improving global health means achieving health equity for all people worldwide (“[Towards a common definition of global health](#),” *The Lancet* 2009, 373 (9679) 1993-1995.) If we are to improve global health we need to recognize the importance of a balanced response which integrates rapid, emergency responses with longer term sustained responses which are multisectoral and transnational. It requires that national governments and international organizations and donors support initiatives such as the International Health Partnership which seeks to implement the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action in the health sector) www.who.int.