

## *Leaving no one behind? Reflection for action in a changing world*

On January 1, 2016, the United Nations' (UN) 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into effect to end extreme poverty while combatting health, social and economic injustices - with an overarching goal to *leave no one behind*. These SDGs are being implemented at a time when both socioeconomic inequalities and protectionist measures are on the rise. To facilitate sustainable global action, diverse actors in community, research, policy and practice settings from health and other sectors must collaborate on this bold SDG agenda.

With this global context in mind and building on the dialogue and outcomes from the [2016 Vancouver Statement for the Fourth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research](#) and other calls to action such as the [UN Every Woman, Every Child](#) Initiative, the **23<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Conference on Global Health** will provide a forum for reflecting on the first 1000 days of global action and implementation of the SDGs as they impact on the health and well-being of nations around the world.

As we celebrate Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it seems fitting that we also pause and reflect on our leadership role in moving this agenda forward as a nation alongside other countries. How are we doing? What are we learning? What global actions are still required by countries to achieve the SDGs throughout the world and in Canada? These actions must be grounded in innovative, collaborative, inter-sectoral, and interdisciplinary approaches that draw upon the best available evidence from different disciplines and sectors. They must also attend to gender, equity and ethical considerations, while interrogating the power relations between actors that define and shape these agendas in the first place.

### Sub-themes

1. **Tackling poverty and social exclusion** remain ongoing, persistent challenges for all nations, requiring a rethink in which actions are still needed while reflecting on what we can learn from our past attempts. Groups who are affected by deeply engrained social and economic inequities are systematically excluded from participating in the decisions that affect **their health and well-being**. To effectively tackle poverty and social exclusion requires a combination of evidence-informed intersectoral actions, leadership

and other strategies that result in a redistribution of social and economic resources for improving ***the health and well-being of poorer populations and nations***. Among many strategies, the following merit special attention with consideration to targeted, universal and proportionate universalist approaches, and to what countries can learn from contemporary and historical efforts to implement them:

- Universal health coverage (UHC) – The achievement of UHC remains an elusive goal for many nations around the globe. The 2017 conference will extend the dialogue from the Fourth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research on resilient and responsive health systems to discuss issues such as achieving equitable coverage, cost-effective and equitable health system models, outbreak preparedness, collaborative and participatory strategies that counter efforts to minimize the right to health and UHC for different groups, and research on the effectiveness of UHC approaches.
  - Universal Education Coverage (UEC) - Education for all is a major determinant of health and well-being. A universal basic education system for all children and a continuing education system accessible to all individuals throughout the life course should be possible for governments to achieve; UEC must be responsive to the needs of those it serves through meaningful engagement of children, families and other social actors.
  - Universal Basic Income Coverage (UBIC) – Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights cannot be realized if people do not have enough income for food, shelter and clothing, and the ability to move or communicate freely, nor if they are systematically excluded from decisions that directly affect them. In response, there is renewed attention and experimentation in several countries with different guaranteed annual income models.
2. **Health of marginalized populations during and following periods of crisis**—stigma, discrimination and sexual and gender based violence directly influence the ***physical, emotional and mental health and well-being*** of individuals such as Indigenous peoples, refugees, migrant workers and other marginalized populations. There is a pressing need to develop, implement and equitably scale up evidence-informed and sustainable actions, ***preparedness strategies and resilient health service delivery modalities*** that equitably and ethically address the needs of these groups, and that respond to humanitarian crises, ***complex emergencies, infectious disease outbreaks*** and the growing burden of ***non-communicable diseases***.
  3. **Sustainable and equitable environmental action** – Increased global warming, deforestation, pollution and natural disasters have significant economic, social and health consequences with particularly deleterious effects on vulnerable groups and countries. These largely human-made phenomena are continuing to put our health and that of future generations at risk. Greater priority must be placed on implementing sustainable, integrated and scalable actions across sectors to better adapt to, mitigate

the threats and harmful effects of climate change and environmental degradation **affecting vulnerable populations** and nations as well as the global economy.

4. **Research, Innovation and Measurement for equitable action**— ongoing interdisciplinary research, monitoring and measurement efforts are critical to assessing country progress against the SDGs and targets, measuring our global collective impact and the unintended consequences. Strengthening systems and public health practice to facilitate and build capacity in this area are crucial. We also need to create the necessary conditions that encourage a culture of creative experimentation and stimulate innovative thinking as well as the scaling of equitable solutions to tackle complex problems, while taking stock of and learning from our histories and past failures so that we may adapt to advance sustainable and equitable global actions that redress social and economic injustices.