THE ECONOMICS OF SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES:

a resource book





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BACKGROUND

he strong links between socioeconomic factors or policies and health were documented in the World Health Organization (WHO) Commission on Social Determinants of Health report. Yet even when health and health equity are seen as important markers of development, expressing the benefits of social determinants of health interventions in health and health equity terms alone is not always sufficiently persuasive in policy settings where health is not a priority, or when trade-offs exist between health and other public policy objectives.

Previous research has shown that increased attention to policies across sectors that improve health and health equity requires better preparation with regard to knowledge on the economic rationales for interventions, and how intersectoral policies are developed and implemented.

In 2012, the World Health Assembly passed resolution 65.8, which endorsed the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health and emphasized the need for "delivering equitable economic growth through resolute action on social determinants of health across all sectors and at all levels". Improving understanding of economic rationales for intersectoral policy and programme interventions is therefore an important component of work for countries implementing social determinants of health recommendations. For this reason, WHO launched the Economics of Social Determinants of Health project to describe and discuss the potential for economic rationales to support the case for social determinants of health interventions, and to summarize economic evidence in key public policy areas.

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