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# Member State Briefing: Social Determinants of Health

31 October 2022

Department of Social Determinants of Health



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# World Health Assembly Resolution 74.16 adopted in May 2021

This resolution on “social determinants of health” requested the Director-General of WHO:

- To prepare a new report, building on the report of WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health in 2008
- To support Member States on monitoring of health inequities, including preparing an operational framework
- To support Member States and other stakeholders in sharing experiences and building capacity, while also strengthening partnership

**SEVENTY-FOURTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

**WHA74.16**

**Agenda item 22.1**

**31 May 2021**

## **Social determinants of health**

The Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the consolidated report by the Director-General;<sup>1</sup>

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## The social determinants of health

The term “social determinants” is shorthand for the social, political, economic, environmental, cultural and commercial factors that affect health status

**Social determinants of health** are the conditions in which people are *born, grow, work, live, and age*

These conditions influence a wide range of risks and exposures, behaviours and therefore greatly impact upon health outcomes and health equity



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## Health equity

The absence of unjust, avoidable or remediable differences in health among groups defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically

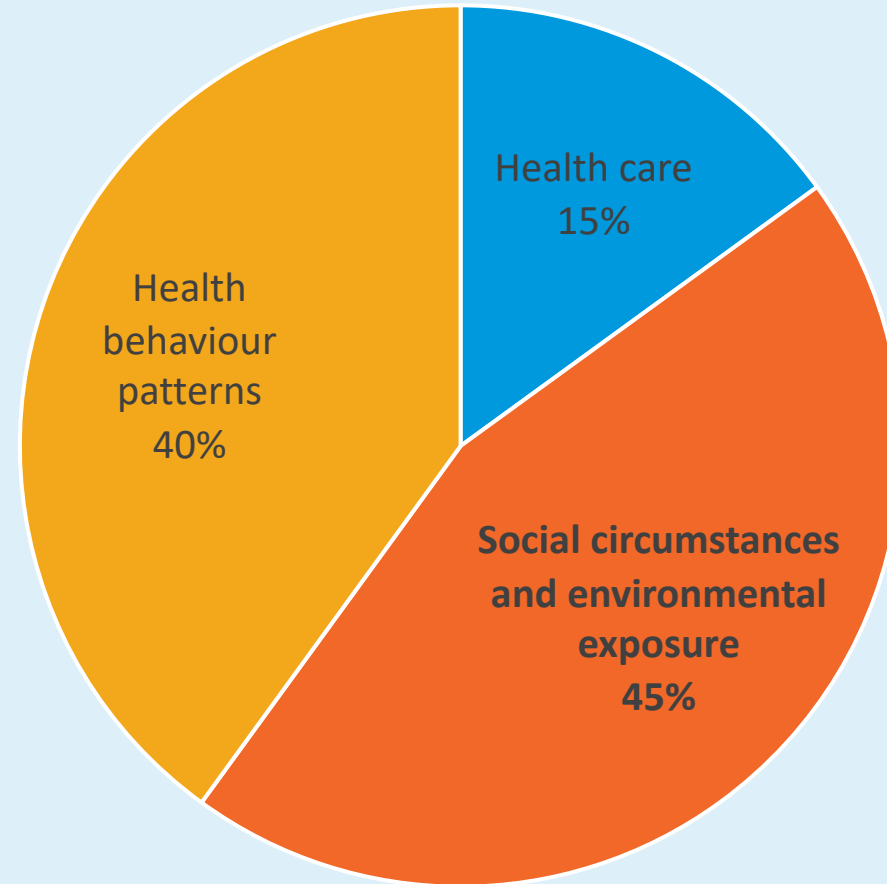


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## The importance of social determinants

Studies assessing the contribution of medical and non-medical factors to average levels of population health consistently show the central importance of factors beyond healthcare

For example, this US study found that social and environmental circumstances contribute 45% to average levels of population health



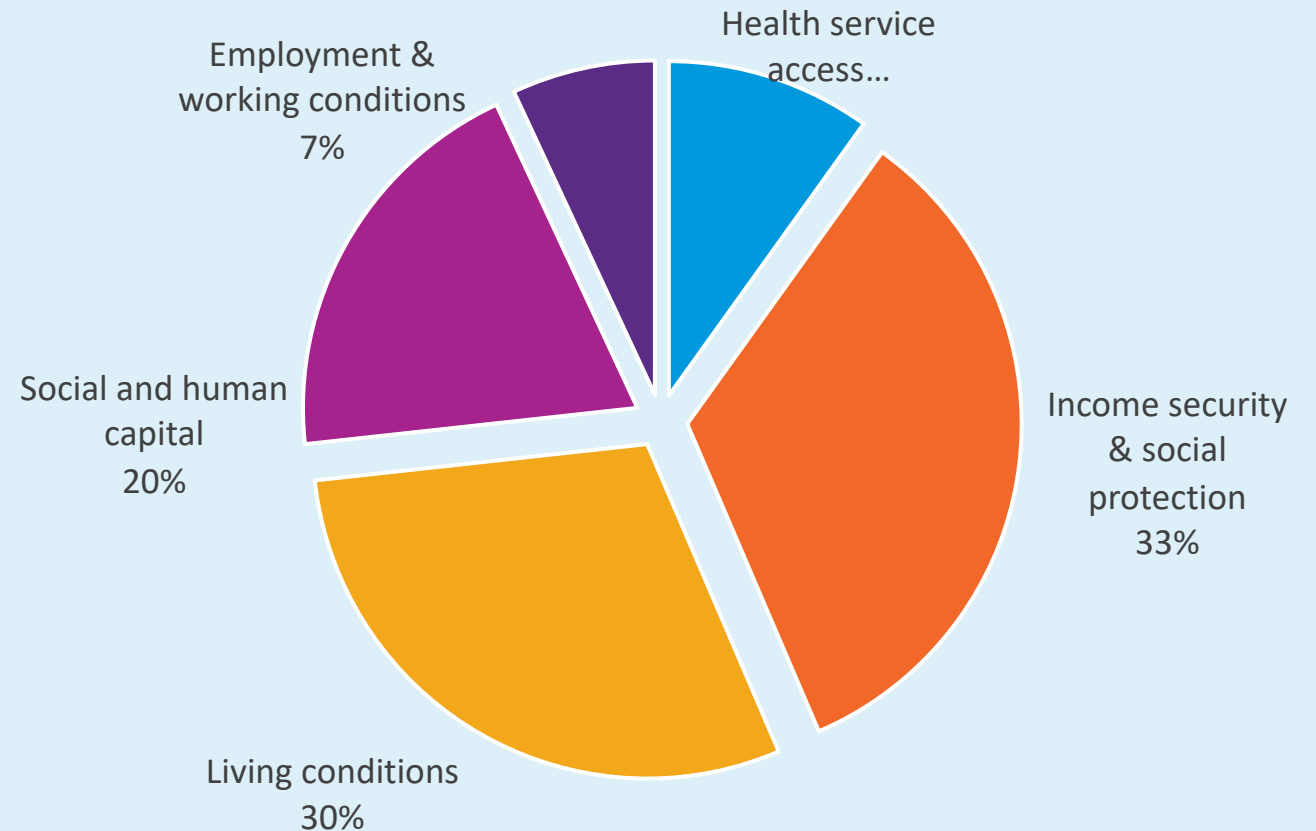
Source: *Health Affairs* 2002; 21: 78-93

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## The importance of social determinants (2)

A study of survey data from EU countries estimated the contribution of different social determinants to **the gap in health** observed between individuals in households in the highest wealth quintile and those in the lowest wealth quintile

Income security and social protection are far more important to health equity than access to health services



Source: WHO EURO, 2019

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## Impact of COVID-19 and other crises

### **As predicted, COVID-19 pandemic has increased health inequities and undermined key social determinants of health**

- COVID-19 morbidity and mortality within countries has disproportionately affected poorer people, marginalized ethnic minorities, including Indigenous Peoples, low-paid essential workers, migrants, populations affected by emergencies including conflicts, incarcerated populations, and homeless people
- Access to COVID-19 vaccination has been grossly unequal
- The disruption to health systems caused by COVID-19 has reversed hard won gains in areas such as immunization
- There is increasing evidence of how the broader impacts of the pandemic have undermined previous gains in education, poverty reduction and gender equality

### **COVID-19 crisis only one of multiple interlinked crises that world currently facing**

- Climate crisis, increasing frequency of war and conflict, and the cost-of-living crisis have exacerbated, and in some cases been catalyzed by, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
- These linked crises are also undermining key social determinants and exacerbating health inequities



# World Report on Social Determinants of Health Equity

Development commenced in 2021, with two advisory groups convened  
Sixteen consultations have been held to seek input, and discussions have also been undertaken with internal focal points within WHO  
Proposed structure: three parts



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# 1. The Context and Problem: Our Interlinked Challenges

- “Social injustice *continues* to kill on a grand scale”
- Achieving health equity will not be possible without addressing key obstacles
- Multiple interlinked crises: climate change, COVID-19, war, cost of living demonstrate flaws in these current systems
- Key illustrative data on health inequities and social determinants
- Promising experiences



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## 2. What to do and how to do it

- Ongoing importance of the comprehensive prescription put forward by the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health
- ±12 illustrative actions - examples of unequivocal actions to address social determinants of health equity and implementation considerations
- Actions grouped into 3 types:
  - Overcoming key obstacles
  - Transitions and trends
  - Role of health sector
- Actions are proxies for broader systemic change in each theme, but specific enough to allow focused discussion of how they can be enacted
- Focus on where WHO and health sector can play a leadership role working with other sectors
- Action summaries will cover barriers and how to overcome them and give examples of promising initiatives



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# Proposed Key Actions (1)

## Theme 1: Action to overcome key obstacles and structural determinants of health equity

<b>Economic systems</b>	<b>Racism</b>
<b>Employment and social protection</b>	<b>Gender Equality</b>
<b>Commercial determinants: marketing of unhealthy products</b>	<b>Rights of refugees and internally displaced people to access health &amp; social services</b>

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## Proposed Key Actions (2)

### Theme 2: Action to direct current and future socio-environmental transitions toward health equity

**Climate change / transition to zero carbon economies**

**Urbanization and Safe Mobility**

**Digital economy**

**Demographic Transitions**

**Food systems and nutrition**

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## Proposed Key Actions (3)

### Theme 3: Action to orient health systems toward health equity

Health sector

Health security

Access to technologies

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### 3. Towards 2030: An Action Agenda

- Who must do what, where, and by when (including role / opportunities of actors across UN system)
- indicators
- How achieving this agenda will contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals



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# Operational framework for monitoring

## Background

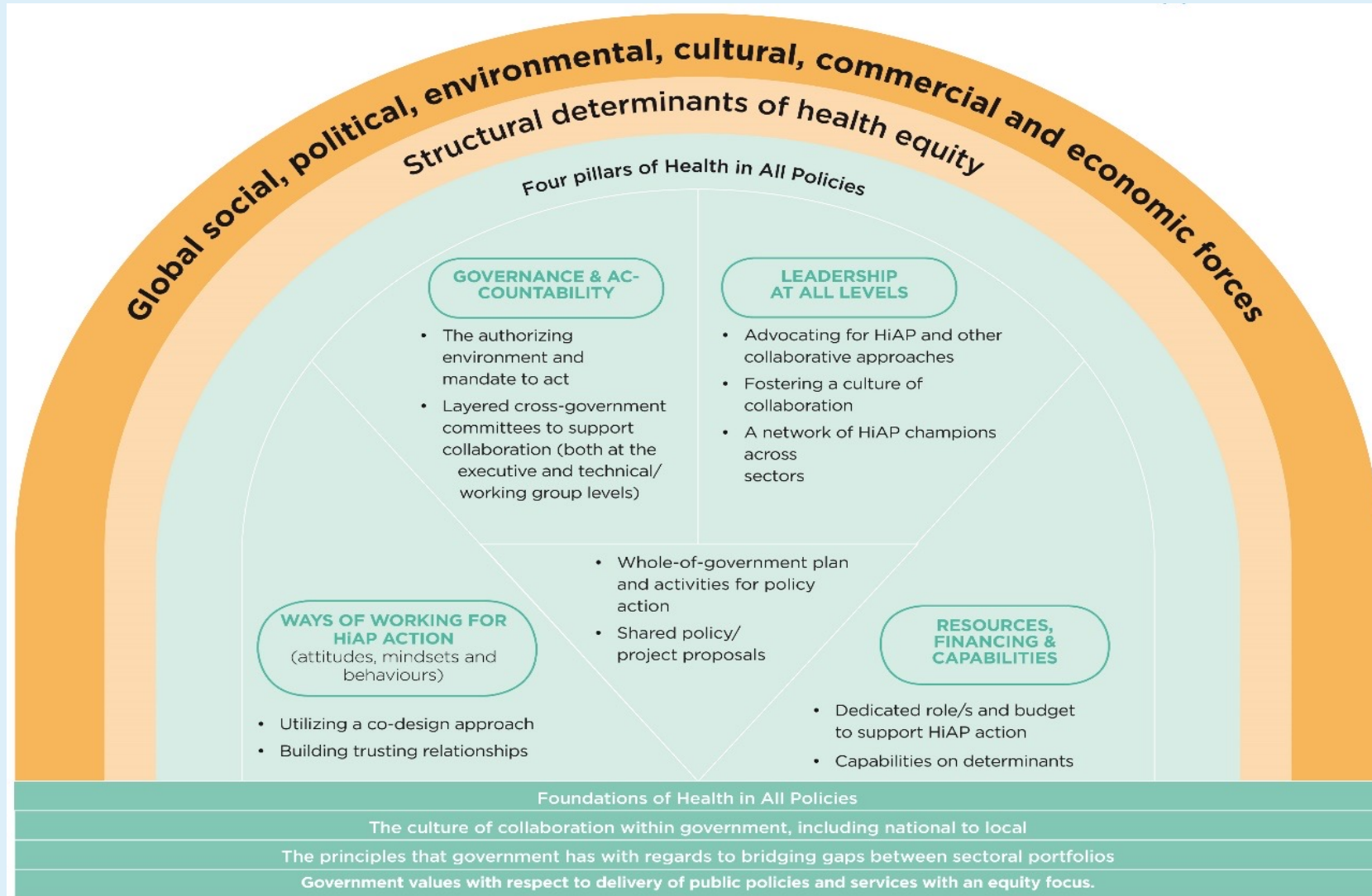
- Institutionalizing robust monitoring of social determinants of health for data to impact policymaking has proved elusive
- Development of ‘WHO Operational Framework for Monitoring Social Determinants of Health Equity’ commenced in 2021
  - An expert group was convened to inform its development
  - External and internal consultations to inform the framework are ongoing
  - Further inputs will be sought from Member States, including testing in individual countries

## Draft operational framework

- Provides guidance on how to monitor data across sectors on social determinants to inform policy-making and implementation
- Highlights key indicators and data sets for country monitoring
- Considers key challenges, and ways to overcome them, that countries face in monitoring and implementation
- Closely linked to monitoring efforts for the Sustainable Development Goals

# Guidance on multisectoral collaboration

- WHO is developing a guidance note 'Sustainable Multisectoral Collaboration for Addressing the Social Determinants of Health, Equity and Well-being'
- Provides practical advice and examples of applications of multisectoral collaboration under four topic headings





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# WHO support to Member States

## **Special Initiative for Action on Social Determinants of Health for Advancing Health Equity**

- With support from Government of Switzerland, WHO has launched Special Initiative to support country action, capacity building, normative work, and advocacy
- Goal is to improve the social determinants of health for at least 20 million disadvantaged people in at least 12 countries by 2028

## **Global Network**

- With support from Government of Canada, WHO is launching a new global network to support action on social determinants of health equity - the network will enable the sharing of experiences and joint work on common technical challenges

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# Work on urban health and commercial determinants of health

## Urban health

- Work on social determinants closely aligned with efforts to strengthen global urban health agenda
- Aim to provide policy- and decision-makers with better understanding of benefits of holistic approach to urban health, and tools for effective, joined-up advocacy and action
- Developing Strategic Guide for Urban Health aimed at local and national policymakers
- Developing capacity building programme to support urban health stakeholders to overcome traditionally fragmented responses to urban health, support cities in understanding their capacity gaps and how to fill them, and foster sharing of successful experiences

## Commercial determinants of health

- Work on social determinants of health encompasses commercial determinants of health
- Building on efforts to look at how specific private sector products and practices, notably the tobacco industry, have an impact on public health, there are increasing calls to take a more systematic approach to contribution of harmful products and commercial practices to global burden of disease
- Aim to develop approaches that allow for leveraging the co-benefits of working with the private sector, while safeguarding against conflicts of interest
- A technical report and conference are planned

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## Next steps

Agenda item on “Social determinants of health” to be discussed at the 152<sup>nd</sup> session of the WHO Executive Board (30 January – 7 February, 2023)

World Report on Social Determinants of Health Equity will be launched in 2023

Operational framework for monitoring will be launched in 2023



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# Thank you

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<https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health>

