

Action on the social determinants for advancing health equity in the time of COVID-19

Perspectives of a WHO Special Initiative



World Health
Organization

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WHO AND CORE PARTNERS SUPPORTING GOVERNMENTS

Why only treat people...

- **WHO headquarter, regional and country offices**
- **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)**
- **University College London's Institute of Health Equity (UCL-IHE)**
- **University of Lausanne (UNIL/UNISANTE)**



**then send them back
to the conditions that made them sick?**

- Adverse social determinants- the root of health inequities
 - COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated health inequities
- Health sector can do more for social measures addressing health equity

Hospitalization, morbidity, mortality:

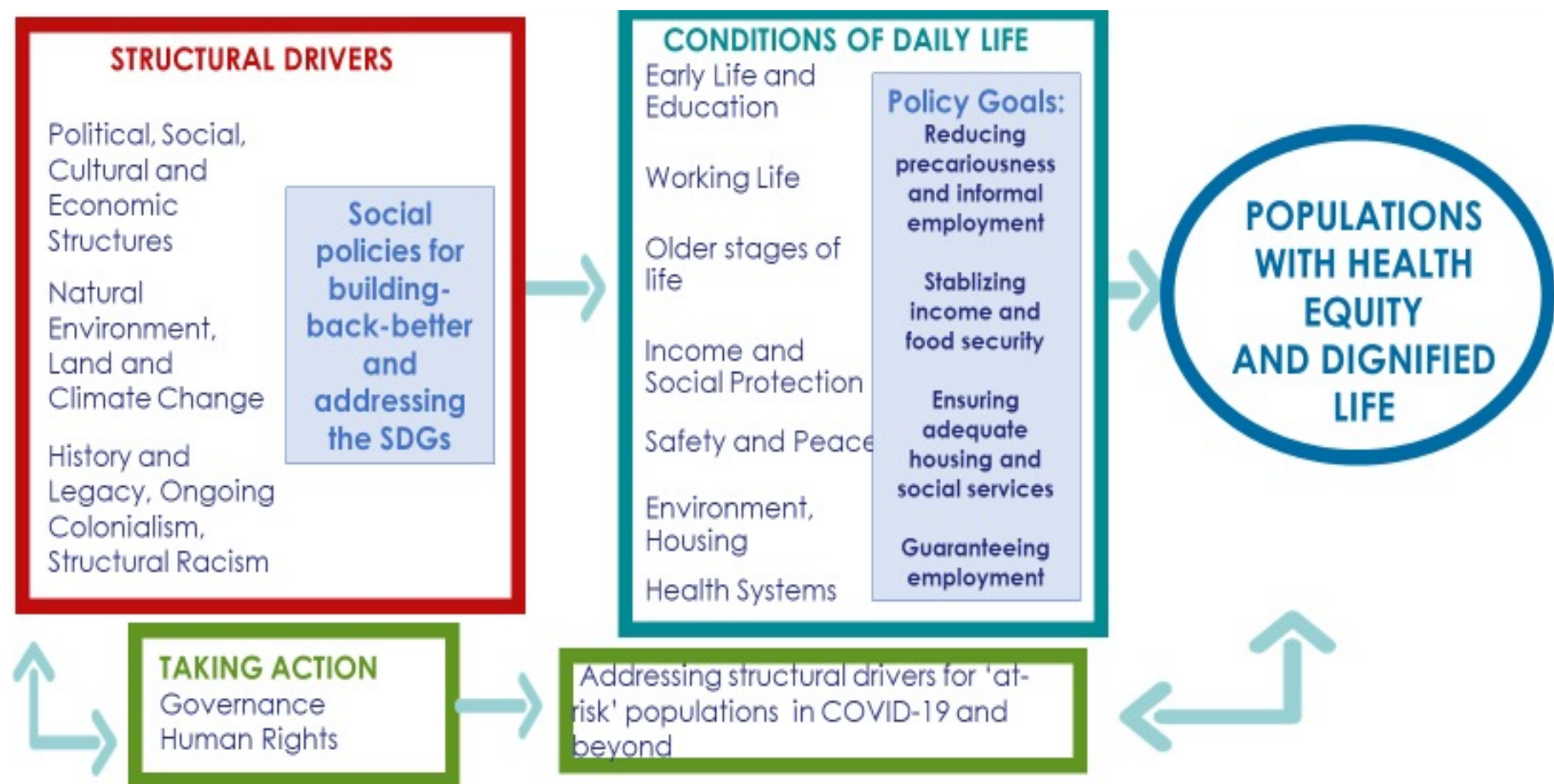
- marginalised racial or ethnic minorities
- low-paid essential workers
- migrants and populations affected by emergencies
- older populations in residential care homes
- incarcerated populations
- homeless people



Source: COVID-19 and the social determinants of health and health equity, WHO, 2021

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240038387>

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AT THE ROOT OF HEALTH EQUITY



Source: Adapted from Pan American Health Organization. *Just Societies: Health Equity and Dignified Lives*. Report of the Commission of the Pan American Health Organization on Equity and Health Inequalities in the Americas. Washington, D.C.: PAHO; 2019.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION OF REGIONS AND TERRITORIES

Diagnosis of the general problem

- Ideological opposition to health equity
- Compatability of sectoral goals
- Operational problems in health sector orientation and knowledge and competencias for intersectoral work

Americas

Chile

Colombia

Costa Rica

El Salvador

Peru

Eastern Mediterranean

Morocco

Occupied
Palestinian
Territories

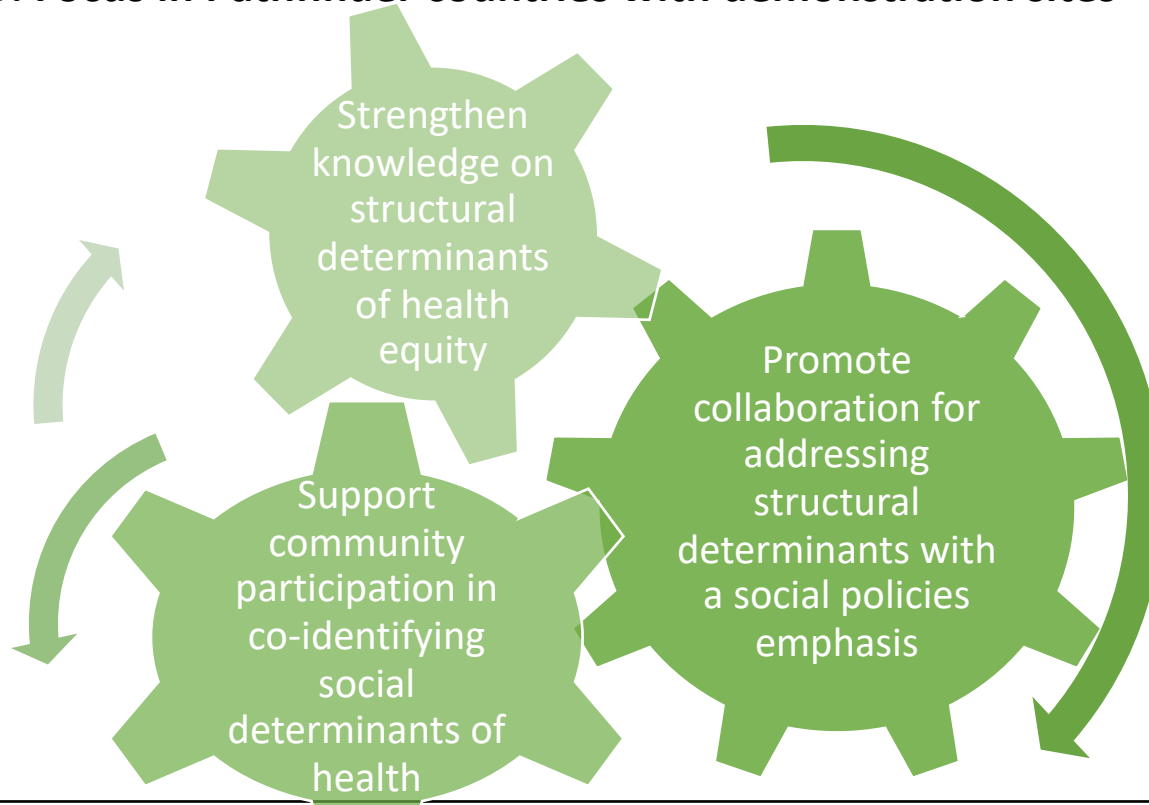
Western Pacific

Lao PDR

The
Philippines

A. Strengthening knowledge and narratives for scale-up

B. Focus in Pathfinder countries with demonstration sites



C. Intra- and Inter-country networks

Initiative impact

Health, social and economic, including COVID-19 recovery, policies are informed by and act on **equity impact assessments of SDH**

REGIONAL OFFICE COORDINATED ACTIVITIES – 1.5 YEARS



Region of the Americas

- Systematic reviews on informal work, employment, migration
- Review of country social policies
- Video case studies
- Partnership with regional domestic workers association



Eastern Mediterranean

- Regional Commission on SDH collected knowledge
- Workshops to raise awareness
- Development of a tool to assist health sector



Western Pacific

- Guidance note on equity during COVID-19 surveillance
- Developed awareness raising video series on gender-based violence, refugees, vaccines
- Vaccine advanced for homeless populations

INITIATING COUNTRY APPROACHES

CHILE

EQUITY AND SDH
AS ONE AXIS OF
THE HEALTH
REFORM

COSTA RICA

COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION
IN SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT

COLOMBIA

INTEGRATE SDH
AND PHC AT THE
LOCAL LEVEL

MOROCCO

CAPACITY BUILDING
NETWORK AND
SOCIAL POLICY
ADVOCACY

LAO PDR

COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION IN
LOCAL HEALTH
DEVELOPMENT

PHILIPPINES

HOMELESS
POPULATIONS
AND
VACCINATIONS

PHASES OF CHANGE

Commitment to advancing health equity through action on the structural determinants

- Coalition formed between committed agencies
- WHO and partners support enhances commitment
- Country change agents emerge
- Knowledge on structural determinants is disseminated

Emphasis on co-benefits across sectors

- Coalitions emerge that aim for co-benefits
- Capacities enhanced through 'change agents' networks
- Working together on the problem results in less competition for resources and clearer narratives

Engagement of multiple stakeholders (civil society, communities, service providers, policy makers, academia)

- Perspectives on structural determinants emerge
- Demonstration sites test the viability of local change
- Co-identification, co-design and co-evaluation of impacts

Experiences translate into bureaucratic/multisectoral change, academic change (teaching/research), and sharing across Pathfinder countries

- Knowledge - investment cases - and budget shifts
- WHO and UN agencies enhance buy-in and scale-up
- Academics spearhead new trainings and research
- Governance and service multisectoral coalitions for equity emerge

**COVID-19 exposes and amplifies
the social injustice of
existing health inequities...**

**it's
time**

**to build a fairer,
healthier world
for everyone,
everywhere**

**...by taking action on
the Social Determinants
of Health to Advance Equity**

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Gracias

Merci

Thank you