

## Health, Poverty and Human Development

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It was not until recently that the relationship between health and poverty was more clearly appreciated. The classical notion maintains that poverty leads to illness by adversely affecting accessibility and affordability of health care up-take among other factors. However, recent research is increasingly showing that health is a very crucial determinant of poverty and human development. Diseases and health problems can negatively affect the quality of human life. The effects of chronic and serious diseases such as malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS on the economic development and social welfare are a major human concern today <sup>(1)</sup>. On the other hand, poor performance of national health systems in developing countries is increasingly eroding human potential. Costs of health and hospital care are continuously adding new families to the pool of poverty in many places around the world.

Recent perspectives, such as that brought about by the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health (CMH) in 2001, are more realistically positioning health in relation to poverty and human development. The CMH report maintains that 'health is a priority goal in its own right, as well as a central input into economic development and poverty reduction <sup>(2)</sup>.

The new understanding of the link between health, poverty and development coupled with the increasingly widening gap between developed and developing nations, has prompted several movements and initiatives to address the situation. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), reform programs and mobilization of donor funding to poor countries are among the global inputs exerted to tackle issues of poverty and development.

Among the awareness raising campaigns is the global theme issue on poverty and human development organized by the Council of Science Editors (CSE). In this month of October 2007, more than 230 scientific journals worldwide are publishing simultaneously on this topic.

The Sudanese Journal of Public Health (SJPH) is devoting this issue to the theme of health, poverty and development as part of the CSE initiative. Poverty in Sudan is estimated to be in the range of 50-60 percent placing a huge burden on human development in this country <sup>(3)</sup>. The effects of poverty on population health and the health consequences on social and economical life of citizens are clearly witnessed in Sudan. Efforts to address poverty from the angle of improving population health are receiving more attention and focus as the understanding of the key developmental role of health is getting better. The SJPH theme issue thus came in support for these efforts through raising awareness, providing some evidence and stimulating interest and further research pertinent to health, poverty and development.

### References

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