



# Social Determinants of Global Population Health Conference

Charles Hotel  
Cambridge, MA, USA

January 15 and 16, 2010

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF GLOBAL

POPULATION HEALTH CONFERENCE

## Executive Summary

The Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies (HCPDS) will convene a two-day *Social Determinants of Global Population Health Conference* in January 2010 for leading scholars and public policy officials from around the globe. The conference will enable participants to generate policy action items aimed at reducing health inequity by improving social, economic and environmental standards worldwide. This event represents a unique and timely opportunity in the policy arena, especially pursuant to the release of the *WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health Final Report* in 2008 and the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America Report* in 2009.

The aim of the conference is not to re-invent the work of these Commissions but rather to build on their recommendations and:

- Develop concrete policy action recommendations;
- Develop an applied research agenda to build the evidence base for policy action; and
- Build commitment among governments to be leaders and employ a social determinants approach to national health policy.

The participant list - - government officials, politicians, policy consultants, foundation leaders, NGO's, academicians (within and outside Harvard) - - will involve those most invested in the conference's key themes and countries of focus. Keynote speakers include Sir Michael Marmot, Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London, and Chair of the *WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health*; and Dr. Julio Frenk, Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health and former Minister of Health in Mexico. Mark McClellan, the director of the Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform at the Brookings Institution, has also been invited to speak. Plenary sessions will be followed by small, facilitator-led discussion sessions.

The HCPDS is pleased to have as co-sponsors: the Harvard Center for the Developing Child (HCDC); the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America; and the Harvard Initiative for Global Health (HIGH).

## Background

The World Health Organization states that "*the social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system.*" Broadly, those who live in poor social circumstances experience worse health outcomes, including increased susceptibility to chronic diseases (such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes,) and infectious diseases (such as HIV/AIDS and malaria), higher rates of mortality and more barriers to healthcare access. Both the

WHO and RWJF Commissions have called publicly for action on identifying and improving social determinants of health, and their reports present explicit recommendations with the aim of achieving health equity.

Multiple programs and scholars at Harvard continue to build upon an impressive collection of research concerning social determinants of health, public and private sector policies, and demographic shifts that affect the health and well being of global populations. Progress in the future will depend on findings from multiple disciplines - demography, epidemiology, economics, sociology, and medicine – that integrate an understanding of the broad range of economic, sociological, environmental causes of child health and development, mortality, and fertility. This, however, only represents half of the daunting challenges faced by health officials worldwide. How to effectively translate evidence-based findings into effective policies and programs continues to challenge academicians and practitioners alike.

## **Goals**

The Social Determinants of Global Population Health Conference will:

- Draw on the leadership, talent, and expertise of academic, government, foundation, industry, and NGO experts, who will jointly review and analyze the merits of various policy agendas in the areas of early childhood development; aging and intergenerational transfers; gender inequities; safe housing and environments.
- Develop tangible next steps to translate public health and social science research into effective practice and policy.
- Foster commitments from nations around the globe to make effective changes in the areas of resource and funding redistribution, legislation and policy enactment, and amendments to public regulation and oversight.
- Develop strategies for communicating to politicians, activists, and the public at large the ramifications of health inequalities in a compelling and urgent manner.
- Further solidify a spirit of collaboration between Harvard research centers and academic departments, most notably the HCPDS, HCDC, HIGH, and HUCE (Harvard University Center on the Environment).

## **Conference Description and Format**

The conference will be held on January 15th and 16th, 2010 at the Charles Hotel in Harvard Square, Cambridge, MA. The format will consist of both plenary and breakout sessions (please see detailed conference agenda below). Following the event's two keynote addresses, who will discuss social determinants in international and domestic health, participants will engage in small discussion sessions. On the first day, these sessions will be structured by themes addressed by the Commissions. The second day's sessions will call upon representatives from and conference participants with expertise in the United States, Uganda, Japan, China, Mexico, Brazil, United Kingdom, and India to engage in country-specific dialogue. At the end of the conference, all session facilitators will share the policy action items produced with the entire group of participants.

To maximize the conference's effectiveness and impact, the planning committee felt strongly that well-defined directives as well as expected outcomes should be drafted and circulated prior to the event. In other words, attendees will be clear on their charge and the reason their participation is being requested.

A web site will be also be developed and launched in the months leading up to the event where participants can post and download relevant readings, keep informed of logistic details, write blogs, and engage in dialogue with fellow invitees.

## Friday, January 15, 2010 (Day 1)

- 9:00 a.m.            **Welcome**  
Lisa Berkman, Director, Harvard Center for Population & Development Studies
- 9:30 a.m.            **Opening Remarks**  
Julio Frenk, Dean, Harvard School of Public Health
- 10:00 a.m.           **Keynote Address**  
Sir Michael Marmot, Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health,  
University College, London  
Chair, *WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health*
- 11:00 a.m.            Break
- 11:15 a.m.           **Special Address:**  
(invited) Mark McClellan, Director, Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform,  
Brookings Institution, Co-Chair, *RWJF Commission to Build a Healthier America*
- 12:15 p.m.           **Lunch**
- 1:30 p.m.            **Breakout Sessions by Theme**  
- Equity from the Start  
- Healthy Places Healthy People  
- Intergenerational Transfers and Social Protection Across the Lifecourse  
- Aging  
- Health Equity in All Policies, Systems, and Programs  
- Gender Equity  
- Political Empowerment
- 4:00pm                **Break (Session leaders and rapporteurs prepare to report to group)**
- 4:45pm                **Plenary session**  
Each group to report back on outcomes and action items
- 6:30pm                **Meet in hotel lobby and walk to Loeb House for dinner**
- 7:00pm                **Dinner at Loeb House**

## Saturday, January 16, 2010 (Day 2)

- 9:00 a.m.            **Welcome and introduction to policy by country breakout sessions**
- 9:15 a.m.            **Breakout sessions by country**  
- Uganda  
- Japan  
- Mexico  
- Brazil  
- United Kingdom  
- India  
- China  
- United States
- 11:45pm              **Break (Session leaders and rapporteurs prepare to report to group)**
- 12:30 p.m.           **Lunch and plenary session**  
Each group to report back on outcomes and action items
- 1:30 p.m.            **Next steps (for session leaders only)**