Commission on Social Determinants of Health

Hubs to support the Commission’s Knowledge Networks (KN)

Terms of Reference

Background
In recent decades global public health has achieved success in improving population level health. Unfortunately, the result has not affected all people equally; health inequalities between and within countries are unacceptably large and continue to grow. A vast body of research exists which demonstrates that social factors, which are shaped by one's relative position in society, account for the bulk of health disparities. In other words, poor people and those from socially disadvantaged groups get sicker and die sooner than people in more privileged social positions. Action to address ill health will continue to waste resources and leave many of the most vulnerable without better health prospects, as long as the focus remains on symptoms and fails also to address the root causes of morbidity and mortality.

Because this holds true throughout the world, a bold change in public health strategies is needed to reverse this trend and work toward better health and greater health equity. The key to success is the integration of social determinants of health as a fundamental approach to developing effective strategies toward improving priority programs and health systems. The Director General at WHO has announced his leadership and support for this approach and is setting up a global Commission on social determinants of health. The Commission is undertaking three tracks of work with the following objectives: (1) learning: to compile and further develop the evidence base on interventions and policies that focus on key social determinants which influence health; (2) action: to catalyze the implementation of the social determinants approach to health in select countries; and (3) political impact: to contribute to the long-term process of incorporating social determinants of health into planning, budgeting, policy at WHO and in the global public health community. The most important objective of the Commission is to leverage policy change by turning existing SDH public health knowledge into actionable global and national agendas.

Objective of the Knowledge Network Hub
Provide leadership to the Knowledge Network (KN) by coordinating and contributing toward the knowledge generation activities and managing the corresponding budget for one of the Commission’s themes.
Activities of the KN Hub
The activities to be undertaken by each KN Hub include, but are not limited to the following:

Member selection

In collaboration with the Commission Secretariat, identify a list of 10-12 potential KN members, taking into consideration diversity in terms of: geography, gender, area of expertise and type of institutional affiliation. Member selection is subject to conflict of interest screening and each prospective member will be required to complete the WHO Declaration of Interest form. The KN Hub will be responsible for selecting the Hub’s co-chair (to work in conjunction with KN member co-chair).

Coordinate generation/landscaping of knowledge

The KN Hub will be responsible for contributing toward and overseeing the completion of the following activities:

Scoping the KN’s theme area
Prepare framework for informing potential KN members of the scope of work to be undertaken. Broadly outline the key dimensions of the theme to be covered by the KN and how this work will be organised, in conjunction with the knowledge management mechanisms of the Commission as a whole, to produce results in a form useful to the Commission.

Review and analysis
- Define processes and mechanisms to assemble and manage the knowledge required for the KN members to undertake the review and analysis tasks.
- Play a lead role, in coordination with KN members, in reviewing the current state of knowledge of interventions, pathways through which the social determinant in focus translate into ill health, and policy approaches that focus on the KN’s theme (sources should include published and grey literature, policy briefs, reports from pioneering groups, etc).
- Identify gaps in knowledge and potential strategies to be piloted through work with the Commission’s ‘Country Engines.’

Policy Recommendations
- Oversee the development of policy recommendations and innovative models for designing interventions and catalyzing planning processes at country level which use social determinants of health as a guiding framework. These recommendations should be keyed to different geographic levels, regions of the world and levels of socio-economic development.
- Manage and coordinate the writing process of the interim, final reports and policy briefs for the Commission. The majority of the writing will be undertaken by the KN members, with oversight and peer review by the Secretariat.
Coordinate KN meetings

Provide logistical support for at least two KN meetings, including: secure meeting venue, identify opportunity upon which to 'piggy back' if appropriate, arrange participant travel, prepare background materials, and develop agenda in coordination with KN co-chair.

Manage KN products

- Update, as per input received from KN members, repository of all relevant papers, case studies, policy briefs, etc. from the 'landscaping' exercise of the KN. This will serve as the background information needed by KN members to complete their tasks and as a consolidation of evidence available in the public domain.
- Develop linkages between products and knowledge generated to overall goals of the Commission’s ‘learning track’ to create an incentive for members to ensure that knowledge flows within the KN and across other KNs.
- Coordinate product revision process with the Commission’s Secretariat.
- Ensure product deadlines are met.

Communication

- Maintain regular communication with the Secretariat's KN Coordinator to ensure synergy and shared learning across the KNs and alignment between the KN’s work plan with the Commission's mission.
- Implement user-friendly communication mechanisms to facilitate regular updates, exchange of ideas and collaborative document preparation by KN members.
- Serve as 'focal point' and knowledge broker for all inquiries from other KNs, the Secretariat, and interested parties regarding the work of the KN.

Liaise with Commission

As a mechanism to work toward the finished product, maintain linkages with:

- Other KN Hubs
- Commission Secretariat
- WHO Reference Group
- ‘Country Engine’ teams

Administration

- Periodic review and updating of KN work plan to ensure quality of final product.
- Manage KN's working budget and prepare and submit financial reports to Secretariat.

Budget

It is anticipated that the Secretariat will broker the fundraising needed to cover all justifiable costs related to accomplishing the stated objective of the KN Hub. It is the responsibility of the KN Hub to develop the budget, which will be agreed upon with the Commission Secretariat. Once funding is secured, it is anticipated that the organization will enter into a direct contractual arrangement with the funder to make explicit the budget and accounting procedures.
Key deliverables
The KN Hub will be responsible for overseeing and contributing to all policy briefs and the interim and final reports, as per agreed upon with the KN members. These products will be published by WHO and disseminated to all actors in the Commission as part of the iterative learning process. As such, they will contribute toward the development of the process itself, as well as toward accomplishing the goals of the Commission.

Final Report to the Commission should include but not be limited to:

- Key findings and gaps in knowledge from the landscaping exercise. The bulk of this should include an inventory of successful sectoral and intersectoral policies and programmes that illustrate a positive impact on mean health status and health gaps through action on social determinants. Interventions should be classified according to a typology of countries.
- Subregional and national case reviews on the impact of the KN’s theme on health and health equity; successful policy interventions should be included, with information on the context in which they were implemented.
- In-depth country studies where governments have implemented robust policies to tackle the social determinant in focus; studies will identify factors that have facilitated or obstructed government commitment and buy-in from other key constituencies.
- Recommendations for action at global and country level.

Timeline
It is the responsibility of the KN Hub to coordinate and/or participate in the following activities:

**2005**
**March:** Commission launch

**April-May:** All potential KN members contacted and list finalized of those accepting invitation to participate; KN Hub co-chair selected

**May:** Participate in inaugural meeting for leaders of all KN Hubs (1-2 participants per Hub)

**May-June:** First meeting of KN members to discuss: overall mission of Commission, KN objectives, work plan and division of labour

**May-June** Submit to Commission finalized work plan and budget as per agreed upon at first meeting

**June:** Identify opportunity on which to 'piggyback' for holding the KN dissemination and feedback meeting with Commissioners; begin coordinating event (anticipated to take place between September 2005-September 2006)
**July -Dec.**   KN Review and analysis activities underway

**Nov-Dec:**  Second KN members meeting; working toward the recommendations phase of work, while review and analysis continues

**December:**  First interim report due

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**2006**

**Mar- June:**  Small writers meeting to discuss the final report

**September:**  Final report due

This timeline is limited to key milestones. The KN's iterative mode of work involving learning, advocacy and development of recommendations, which will rely extensively on virtual collaboration, will require flexible and agile coordination and management on the part of the KN Hub.

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