



**Social Determinants of Health Discussion Paper 6**  
Contributing to the project, *The Economics of Social Determinants of Health*



**ADDRESSING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF  
HEALTH THROUGH INTERSECTORAL ACTIONS:  
FIVE PUBLIC POLICY CASES FROM MEXICO**

DEBATES, POLICY & PRACTICE, **CASE STUDIES**



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**The Series:**

The Discussion Paper Series on Social Determinants of Health provides a forum for sharing knowledge on how to tackle the social determinants of health to improve health equity. Papers explore themes related to questions of strategy, governance, tools, and capacity building. They aim to review country experiences with an eye to understanding practice, innovations, and encouraging frank debate on the connections between health and the broader policy environment. Papers are all peer-reviewed.

**Background:**

The strong causal links between public policies and the social gradient in health were documented in the World Health Organization (WHO) Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) report. Yet even when health and health equity are seen as important markers of development, expressing benefits of social determinants of health (SDH) interventions in health and health equity terms alone is not always sufficiently persuasive in policy settings where health is not a priority, or when trade-offs need to be made. Previous research has shown that increased attention on policies across sectors that improve health and health equity requires better preparation with regards to knowledge on the economic rationales for interventions, as well with regards to how intersectoral policies are developed and implemented. In recognition of the usefulness of intersectoral actions and the prior experience of Mexico, the Mexican Task Force worked with WHO and PAHO as part of a project titled The economics of social determinants of health, to produce case studies of intersectoral policies, including reference to the use of economic rationales in the process, and to provide input to the other project publication - a resource book on the economics of social determinants of health and health inequalities.

Mexico has been recognized for its work on social policies addressing key health determinants related to poverty and poor living conditions, including for programmes like Oportunidades [Opportunities].

The views presented in this report are those of the author and do not represent the decisions, policies or views of the World Health Organization.

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# Abbreviations

ANSA	National Agreement for Food Health
CENAPRA	National Center for Injury Prevention
CSDH	WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health
HDI	Human Development Index
IMESEVI	Mexican Initiative for Road Safety/Mexican Road Safety Initiative
MOH	Ministry of Health of Mexico
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PDHO	Human Development Programme – ‘Oportunidades’
PDZP	Programme for the Development of Priority Zones
SDH	Social determinants of health

# Executive summary

Currently, the Mexican Health Sector is implementing public policies that tackle the social determinants of health (SDH), mainly to reduce health inequities. However, only a few of these policies involve other sectors. Traditionally, the health sector has taken care of health, despite the fact that the burden of disease is mostly related to the conditions in which many people are born, grow, live, work and age. These social determinants, however, go beyond the realm of the health sector. The participation of other public administration sectors is therefore needed to effectively address SDH such as income, housing, drinking water and education, among others.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is thus fostering a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach to improve population health by addressing the social determinants of health. This policy approach addresses the social factors that influence health, but which reside outside the health system and in policy sectors other than health. This approach builds on earlier practices of intersectoral collaboration and healthy public policy, but focuses on action in the policy sphere in a more systemic manner rather than applied to single health issues.

However, intersectoral policy-making is difficult because it requires setting common goals, delivering integrated responses and providing increased accountability across government agencies. “To harness health and well-being, governments need institutionalized processes which value cross-sector problem solving and address power imbalances. This includes providing the leadership, mandate, incentives, budgetary commitment and sustainable mechanisms that support government agencies to work collaboratively on integrated solutions.” (1)

Despite the difficulties associated with intersectoral coordination, Mexico has gained relevant policy-making evidence that a HiAP approach has important positive efficiency, equity and health effects. Based on these experiences, five public policies were selected, which can provide global lessons for designing and implementing intersectoral actions tackling SDH: the Human Development Programme, Oportunidades, the National Health Insurance Programme, Seguro Popular, the Programme for the

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