



## Social Determinants of Health Discussion Paper 9



# Integration of social determinants of health and equity into health strategies, programmes and activities: health equity training process in Spain

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



# Integration of social determinants of health and equity into health strategies, programmes and activities: health equity training process in Spain

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# Executive summary

A training process to integrate a focus on social determinants of health and equity into health strategies, programmes and activities (SPAs) was carried out by the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality in 2010–2011. The training process was part of the equity action lines launched by the Ministry and reflected its interest in promoting and developing tools for moving towards the concept of health in all policies.

The training methodologies applied in Spain drew from the experience of the Chilean Ministry of Health in 2008–2009 of revising health programmes for greater health equity. Both the Chilean and Spanish trainings were guided by the work of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health. The training was technically supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and the Virtual Public Health Campus of the Pan American Health Organization/WHO Regional Office for the Americas.

The goal of the Spanish health equity training was to develop and strengthen the capacity of the management teams of professionals working at the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (national level), regional health departments and other key administration levels in areas considered critical for reducing health inequities. The three specific objectives of the training process were:

- ✔ to build participants' theoretical understanding of health equity, social determinants of health, and programme evaluation cycles;
- ✔ to build participants' methodological capacity to review public health SPAs from the perspective of health equity and social determinants of health;
- ✔ to produce a guide that synthesized the methodology, background resources, and experience of the training.

The guide – entitled the *Methodological guide to integrate equity into health strategies, programmes and activities* – was published in 2012. The guide was developed with the aims of raising awareness on health equity and the social determinants of health approach among professionals in the health sector and in those sectors with an impact on the health of the population, and providing a practical tool to ease the effective integration of equity into health SPAs. The guide is available in both English and Spanish.<sup>1</sup>

This paper aims to describe the methods and process used for the Spanish health equity training, highlight some of the emerging results and describe lessons learnt across the Spanish experience. It therefore aims to contribute to the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health by supporting specifically the priority area *on further reorienting the health sector towards reducing health inequities, including moving towards universal health coverage that is accessible, affordable, and good quality for all*.

<sup>1</sup> The Spanish edition is entitled *Guía metodológica para integrar la equidad en las estrategias, programas y actividades de salud*. For the English version, See [http://www.msssi.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/prevPromocion/promocion/desigualdadSalud/jornadaPresent\\_Guia2012/docs/Methodological\\_Guide\\_Equity\\_SPAs.pdf](http://www.msssi.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/prevPromocion/promocion/desigualdadSalud/jornadaPresent_Guia2012/docs/Methodological_Guide_Equity_SPAs.pdf).



There were two parts to the process of reviewing and redesigning key public health SPAs:

- ① Review of key concepts, frameworks and definitions, including the social production of health and disease, the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health framework, the health system as a social determinant of health, intersectorality, social participation, equity in health and health care, the Tanahashi framework for effective coverage, and theoretical models of programme evaluation, including the theory of programme change.
- ② Integration of a focus on social determinants of health and health equity into the SPAs, which was composed of three main activities:

Checklist for the initial equity analysis through the review of nine areas: objectives, target population, needs assessment, analysis of actions, implementation, intersectoral action, social participation, outcomes and evaluation, and equity challenges.

- 2.2 Five-step review cycle, referred to in the Spanish methodological guide with the acronym: **E-Q-U-I-T-(Y)**:

step E: Examine the SPA

step Q: the Question of who accesses the SPA and who benefits from it

step U: Understanding the barriers and facilitating factors

step I: Interrelating the SPA with the social determinants of health

step T: Thinking of the redesign plan

- 2.3 Last step, redesign, letter Y of the acronym (E-Q-U-I-T-) **Y**:

step Y: Your time to redesign

This paper includes a lessons learnt section based on the experience of Spain, describing aspects considered relevant for the transferability of the process:

- ✔ criteria for the selection of SPAs and team participants;
- ✔ organization of the training (in person and online);
- ✔ training as an integrated part of government strategies for the reduction of health inequities;
- ✔ integrating an equity focus in the ongoing evaluation, design and revision of SPAs;
- ✔ required resources and tools, and sustainability.

In summarizing the key points of this section, it is important to emphasize:

- ✔ the usefulness of a methodology that combines learning and action through presentations, readings, exercises, discussions and forums that promote a progressive learning of concepts;
- ✔ the relevance of interdisciplinarity, intersectorality and social participation in the composition of the working teams, as these aspects are required for an ideal equity review

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