

# Health inequalities – developing a global curriculum



Julie Fish & Kate Karban  
June 2013

Social Work and Health Inequalities Network

# Global Health Inequalities

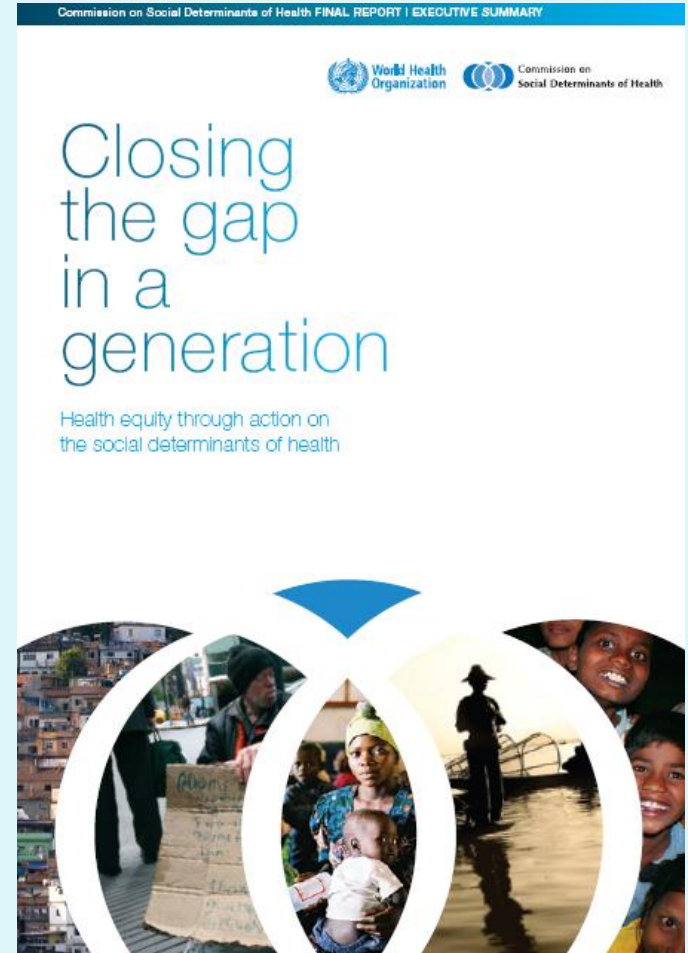
- ▶ Need to recognise the global forces that shape underlying social conditions that influence health
- ▶ The forced migration of peoples following armed conflict, political dissidents seeking asylum or those fleeing persecution in their country of origin
- ▶ The well being of children throughout the world who do not have access to health and education or forced by economic circumstances into child labour



# Closing the gap (WHO 2008)

## – Three principles of action

- ▶ Improve the conditions of daily life /give children an equitable start in life
- ▶ Tackle the inequitable distribution of power money and resources
- ▶ Investment in training of policy makers and health practitioners and raise awareness of the social determinants of health



# What are health inequalities?

- ❑ Differences in health outcomes or experiences
- ❑ They do not primarily derive from variations in access to medical treatment
- ❑ Arise from social conditions that have a negative impact upon people's health and their 'ability to live a flourishing life'
  - Poor housing,
  - inadequate diet,
  - unemployment,
  - poverty
  - impaired mobility
- ❖ Known as health inequalities: they are unjust and amenable to social and political change.
  - ▶ Why are social workers concerned?



# Examples of downstream interventions in social work

- ▶ Access to screening programmes for people with learning disabilities;
- ▶ Health care access for Pakistani women and their children in Hong Kong;
- ▶ Improving psychosocial care for cancer patients;
- ▶ Data mining 'victim of crime' presentations in hospital emergency settings;
- ▶ Social work in rural China: advancing women's health and well being;
- ▶ Developing professional knowledge about cancer in LGBT people.



# Social work and health inequalities: upstream approaches

## Social Work Practice Continuum



Source: IASW



# Examples of upstream interventions in social work

- ▶ Preventing loneliness and social isolation among older people;
- ▶ My L.I.F.E programme: Assisting adults with learning disabilities to live independently;
- ▶ Supporting people in accessing meaningful work: Recovery approaches in community based adult mental health services;
- ▶ Reablement: a cost-effective route to better outcomes



# Health inequalities of older people living in a residential care home

## Case study:

A residential home for older people where the social worker noted that an activities plan was in small print and posted high on the wall. Activities were the first thing to be cancelled if there was a staffing shortage. The arrangement of the furniture in lounge meant that it was difficult for visitors to sit with their relative and the TV was always on very loudly. Residents were able to communicate but could not hear each other speak.

Blackcurrant squash was provided for everyone whether they liked it or not. Some expressed a preference for a cup of tea but were told it was not time and that the trolley would be along shortly.

Residents appeared unkempt & most needed a hair wash.





# Social work's contribution to improving the quality of life and well being of older people

- **Lack of social or meaningful activity**
- **Lack of dignity**
- **Safeguarding**
- **Ill health prevention**
- **Autonomy/ lack of choice**



# Curriculum links



Health inequalities are relevant to all areas of social work practice:

- ▶ ethics, human rights, diversity and oppression,
- ▶ lifecourse approaches in Human Growth & Development,
- ▶ mental health,
- ▶ interprofessional and interagency collaboration,
- ▶ international social work,
- ▶ research,
- ▶ social model of disability
- ▶ the health effects of neglect, violence and abuse on children and adults,
- ▶ practice learning/ curriculum.

- ▶ Fish, J. (2012) Physical health, dementia and end of life care. The College of Social Work curriculum guide. <http://www.tcsw.org.uk/professional-development/educators>

# Local – Global

- ▶ Creates links between immediate concerns and wider international issues
- ▶ Eg. England – welfare reform and climate of austerity has become focus for social work students and a platform for increasing understanding of global issues of poverty and inequality
- ▶ Also opportunities with responsibility for public health now located with local authorities and development of health and wellbeing boards and anti-poverty strategies.



# Final thoughts

- ▶ A 'health equality imagination' is required (Giles, 2009) Micro and macro level





## Social Work and Health Inequalities Network

How to join the network: **sign up at**  
[www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/socialwork-healthinequalities.html](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/socialwork-healthinequalities.html)

Click on '**subscribe**' and follow the instructions

# References

- ▶ Ashcroft, R. (2010) Health Inequities: Evaluation of Two Paradigms. *Health & Social Work* 35(4) SI 249–56
  - ▶ Bywaters, P. McLeod, M & Napier, L. (2009) *Social work and global health inequalities*. Bristol: Policy Press.
  - ▶ Cemlyn, Sarah(2008) 'Human Rights Practice: Possibilities and Pitfalls for Developing Emancipatory Social Work', *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 2: 3, 222 — 242
  - ▶ Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH)(2008) *Closing the Gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health*. Retrieved 3 August 2012 from:
    - ▶ [www.who.int/social\\_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/en/index.html)
  - ▶ Coren, E., Iredale, W., Bywaters, P., Rutter, D. & Robinson, J. (2010) *The contribution of social work and social care to the reduction of health inequalities: four case studies*. *Research Briefing*. London: SCIE [www.scie.org.uk](http://www.scie.org.uk)
  - ▶ Fish, J. and Karban, K. (2013) Health inequalities at the heart of the social work curriculum. *Social Work Education*. Doi: 10.1080/02615479.2012.742502
    - ▶ <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02615479.2012.742502?journalCode=cswe20>
- Fish, J. (2012) Physical health, dementia and end of life care. The College of Social Work curriculum guide.  
<http://www.tcsw.org.uk/professional-development/educators/>
- ▶ Giles, R. (2009) Developing a health equality imagination. *Hospital practice challenges for social work priorities*. *ISW* 52(4): 525 – 537
  - ▶ Marmot, M. (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives – the Marmot Review. Strategic review of Health Inequalities in England – post2010*
    - ▶ <http://www.marmotreview.org/>
  - ▶ Whitehead, M. and Dahlgren, G. (1992) *Concepts and Principles for tackling inequalities in health*. Copenhagen: World Health Organisation.

