

About this book

In an increasingly integrated, globalised world with new cross-border threats to health, widening disparities in both health and access to health care, and an unacceptable level of human suffering and premature mortality in developing countries, civil society actors are asking, why is so little progress being made by global health actors?

Like its critically acclaimed predecessor, the second edition of *Global Health Watch* covers a comprehensive range of topics, including access to medicines, mental health, water and sanitation, nutrition, and war and conflict.

Unlike other reports on global health, it also draws attention to the politics of global health and the policies and actions of key actors. *Global Health Watch 2* includes chapters on the United States foreign assistance programme, the Gates Foundation, the World Bank, the World Health Organization and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Global Health Watch 2 is not only an educational resource for health professionals and activists, it also makes clear the need for global health advocates to engage in lobbying key actors to do better and to do more, whilst resisting those that do harm.

More praise for Global Health Watch 2

‘For everyone who remains disappointed by the inability of the many global accounts of health and disease to address the fundamental causes of global ill-health and premature death, this is the alternative. *GHW2* looks fearlessly and truthfully at issues which daily occupy the minds of thinking health professionals: reversing poverty, eliminating inequities, tackling environmental change and dealing directly with the delivery of effective health and social services. ... *GHW2* focuses on realisable solutions to each of these problems.’

Hoosen M. ‘Jerry’ Coovadia, Victor Daitz professor of HIV/AIDS research, University of KwaZulu–Natal, Durban

‘An incisive socio-political critique of contemporary global health issues which focuses on determinants rather than diseases, enables the reader to unravel the complexity of global economic governance of health, and helps us understand why appalling health inequities persist across and within nations – a must-read for anyone involved or interested in public health.’

*K. Srinath Reddy, president,
Public Health Foundation of India*

‘*Global Health Watch 2* is insightful and provocative. It goes beyond the traditional health sector. It discusses economic, social and political preconditions for improving health for all. It does not shy away from highlighting the relation between the health of poor and marginalised people with the wealth appropriated by richer people, who have access to political power. In this sense, it is a true developmental report. The facts presented are a reason for great concern. They call for action.’

Jan Pronk, professor of theory and practice of international development, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague

Global Health Watch 2

An alternative world health report

People's Health Movement

CAIRO

Medact

LONDON

Global Equity Gauge Alliance

DURBAN

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Contents

Tables, figures, boxes and images	vii
Acknowledgements	xi
Foreword	xiii
Introduction	I
A An alternative paradigm for development	7
B The health-care sector	35
B1 Health systems advocacy	35
B2 Mental health: culture, language and power	47
B3 Access to health care for migrants and asylum-seekers	62
B4 Prisoners	74
B5 Medicine	87
C Beyond health care	102
C1 Carbon trading and climate change	102
C2 Terror, war and health	112
C3 Reflections on globalisation, trade, food and health	126

C4	Urbanisation	140
C5	The sanitation and water crisis	154
C6	Oil extraction and health in the Niger Delta	170
C7	Humanitarian aid	185
C8	Education	198
D	Holding to account	210
D1	Global health governance	210
D1.1	The global health landscape	210
D1.2	The World Health Organization and the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health	224
D1.3	The Gates Foundation	240
D1.4	The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria	260
D1.5	The World Bank	276
D2	Government aid	289
D2.1	US foreign assistance and health	292
D2.2	Canadian and Australian health aid	317
D2.3	Security and health	334
D3	Transnational corporations	340
D3.1	Protecting breastfeeding	340
D3.2	Tobacco control: moving governments from inaction to action	352
E	Postscript: resistance	359
	Contributors	369
	Index	375

Tables, figures, boxes and images

TABLE A1A	Changes in global poverty, 1981–2004, people	10
TABLE A1B	Changes in global poverty, 1981–2004, population	10
IMAGE A1	ExxonMobil gas plant in the village of Finima, Nigeria	12
IMAGE B1.1	An ill child with diarrhoea arrives by boat and is carried to a health clinic in Matlab, Bangladesh	36
IMAGE B1.2	Women in Sudan attend a birthing ceremony	42
IMAGE B2.1	Young Brazilian girl suffering from mental illness is chained to the wall	48
BOX B2.1	The importance of language	52
BOX B2.2	Fishermen from Sri Lanka	55
BOX B2.3	Traditional healing: Mbarara case study	58
BOX B3.1	Some definitions	63
BOX B3.2	Stuck, ignored and isolated in transit	64
BOX B3.3	Access to health care for ‘internal migrants’ in China	65
BOX B3.4	Migrants’ rights	66
IMAGE B3.1	Undocumented migrant seeking care from Médecins du Monde UK’s Project, London	67
BOX B3.5	Aisha and Jacob	68
BOX B3.6	Not a criminal but held in detention	70
TABLE B4.1	Prison population rate	75
BOX B4.1	The campaign to gain access to anti-retroviral treatment (ART) in South African prisons	77
IMAGE B4.1	Overcrowded remand cell in Malawi	78
BOX B4.2	Human rights abuses at Guantánamo Bay	80

viii **Global Health Watch 2**

IMAGE B5.1	A vendor sells pharmaceuticals at a street market in Senegal	89
IMAGE C1.1	Dry river bed, Namibia	103
IMAGE C1.2	Busy street in Cairo	109
BOX C2.1	The risk of war	113
TABLE C2.1	Framework for defining terrorism	114
BOX C2.2	Health and health care in Iraq	120
IMAGE C3.1	How will rising food prices affect nutrition of consumers and producers?	127
BOX C3.1	How trade liberalisation has encouraged the growth of transnational food corporations	130
TABLE C3.1	World's largest packaged food manufacturers and food retailers, by sales	132
TABLE C3.2	Domestic availability and import quantity of vegetable oils, 1980 and 2003	135
TABLE C3.3	Growth in retail sales of packaged foods, 1996–2002	137
IMAGE C4.1	Rio	141
BOX C4.1	Health risk of street children	144
BOX C4.2	People-centred drinking water and sanitation services in Venezuela	147
BOX C4.3	Partnership for pro-equity water supply and sanitation, Madhya Pradesh	149
BOX C5.1	The MDGs	155
TABLE C5.1	Global water coverage and MDG 7	155
IMAGE C5.1	Young girl carrying water	156
FIGURE C5.1	The price of water	157
TABLE C5.2	Global sanitation coverage and MDG 7	158
IMAGE C5.2	Child collecting water in Indonesia	159
BOX C5.2	The slums of Tiruchiripalli	160
FIGURE C5.2	Effects of poor sanitation on school absenteeism	161
FIGURE C5.3	Effects of poor sanitation on school performance	162
BOX C5.3	What the poor say	163
FIGURE C5.4	Aid to the water supply and sanitation sectors compared with overall aid, 1999–2004	164
BOX C6.1	Overview of the Niger Delta	172
IMAGE C6.1	In the village of Kpean, Nigeria, an oil wellhead that had been leaking for weeks has caught fire	173
IMAGE C6.2	Armed militants make a show of arms in support of their fallen comrades deep in the swamps of the Niger Delta	178

IMAGE C6.3	Oil pipelines and woman with company umbrella in Okrika	179
TABLE C7.1	Rustaq earthquake in Afghanistan and Northridge earthquake in Los Angeles	186
IMAGE C7.1	Woman in India carrying water in area where citizens were relocated following a natural disaster	190
BOX C7.1	The Humanitarian Response Index	195
IMAGE C8.1	Schoolgirl in Mozambique	199
IMAGE C8.2	Students in Sri Lanka	200
FIGURE C8.1	The value of teachers' salaries has fallen dramatically over the last twenty-five years	201
BOX C8.1	Migration of teachers in Guyana	203
BOX C8.2	Promises to keep: how the Nine is Mine campaign is holding the Indian government accountable	204
FIGURE D1.1.1	Overview of global funding in health in 2006	212
TABLE D1.1.1	Summary of selected GHPs	214
FIGURE D1.1.2	GHP board analysis	220
FIGURE D1.2.1	Assessed and voluntary contributions from WHO member states in 2006	226
FIGURE D1.2.2	Allocation of 2008/09 budget by region	227
TABLE D1.2.1	Budget for WHO strategic objectives, 2008/09	228
TABLE D1.3.1	Forbes top twenty billionaires in 2008	243
TABLE D1.3.2	Twenty largest individual grants awarded by the Gates Foundation, 1999–2007	246
TABLE D1.3.3	Top ten grantees in terms of amount/month	248
TABLE D1.3.4	Top ten favoured grantees based on cumulative total of grants, 1999–2007	249
IMAGE D1.4.1	HIV activists in South Africa	261
TABLE D1.4.1	Allocation of funding across the spectrum of health interventions	263
FIGURE D1.4.1	Resources by budget item after Round 6	263
FIGURE D1.4.2	The rising financial commitments of the Global Fund	264
TABLE D1.4.2	Funding disbursements of the Global Fund	264
BOX D1.4.1	Trends from the 2007 replenishment meeting	265
BOX D1.4.2	List of LFAs and number of countries served	266
TABLE D1.4.3	The contribution of the GF to national expenditure on health, May 2003	269
IMAGE D1.4.2	Sign on tree in rural village	272
FIGURE D1.5.1	Cumulative growth in HNP lending and projects	281

X Global Health Watch 2

BOX D1.5.1	The Multi-Country AIDS Programme	282
FIGURE D2.1.1	The structure of US foreign assistance	294
FIGURE D2.1.2	Management of US ODA by agency, 2005	295
FIGURE D2.1.3	US net ODA disbursement	297
TABLE D2.1.1	Top ten recipients of US foreign assistance	298
FIGURE D2.1.4	Recipients of US foreign assistance by region	299
TABLE D2.1.2	The foreign assistance framework	301
BOX D2.1.1	US food aid	304
FIGURE D2.2.1	Net ODA as a percentage of GNI, 2005	319
FIGURE D2.2.2	Net Canadian ODA as a percentage of GNI, 1976–2005	320
FIGURE D2.2.3	Proportion of CIDA expenditure by region, FY 2005–06	321
TABLE D2.2.1	Top ten recipients of gross ODA, 2004–05	321
TABLE D2.2.2	Untied aid as a percentage of total ODA, 1990/91–2004	322
TABLE D2.2.3	Top ten recipients of the 2007–08 Australian aid budget	324
FIGURE D2.2.4	Australian aid levels compared with the average effort of OECD countries	325
FIGURE D2.2.5	Proportion of Australian aid administered by AusAID and other agencies	325
FIGURE D2.2.6	Australian aid budget, 2000–2007	327
BOX D2.2.1	Cuba’s approach to foreign aid for health	330
BOX D3.1.1	Summary of the International Code	343
BOX D3.1.2	The International Baby Food Action Network	344
TABLE D3.2.1	An outline of tobacco industry tactics	353
IMAGE E1	People’s Health Movement: launch of Right to Health campaign in South Africa	360
IMAGE E2	Right to Health Campaign march, South Africa, 2007	361

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A detailed list of contributors, researchers and peer reviewers, as well as organisations who have contributed to the production of the *Watch*, and photo credits, can be found at the back of the book.

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Foreword

Reports on the state of the world's health appear daily in the world's media. UN agencies, NGOs and academic institutions produce vast amounts of data, statistics and analysis. However, what is lacking is a critical and integrated assessment of both the state of global health and the policies and actions taken to reduce global health inequalities and unacceptable levels of ill-health.

Still too often the state of ill-health in many poor countries is framed as a problem of disease, geography, bad luck or poor government. Rarely is it properly framed as a symptom and outcome of political and economic choices, or the current form of globalisation which has created a deep chasm between a minority of 'winners' and a majority of 'losers', whilst simultaneously placing the world at the brink of environmental crisis.

Recent years, however, have seen a rise in interest in 'global health', prompted by the creation of the Millennium Development Goals. Development assistance for health has increased, the number of new global health initiatives has multiplied and the Gates Foundation has massively increased the amount of private financing for global health. But in spite of these developments, why is so little improvement being made?

The People's Health Movement, Medact and the Global Equity Gauge Alliance came together in 2003 to appraise critically the state of global health and to assess the performance and actions of certain key institutions such as the World Health Organization and UNICEF, donor agencies, high-income-country governments, the World Bank, multinational corporations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization.

This resulted in *Global Health Watch 2005–2006*, an alternative world health report that highlighted the root causes of poor health and revealed the

gap between humanitarian rhetoric and reality. It comprised 22 chapters covering a broad array of subjects on global health and development policy, produced from the contributions of more than 120 individuals and the support of approximately 70 organisations across the world.

GHW 1 was released in July 2005 at the second People's Health Assembly held in Cuenca, Ecuador. More than twenty-two official 'launches' of the report took place worldwide in more than sixteen countries.

A shorter summary and campaigning document *Global Health Action 2005–2006* was also produced and disseminated, and translated and printed in Spanish, French and Arabic. The *Watch* also stimulated the production of a Latin American Health Watch and a UK Health Watch. Two advocacy documents (on WHO and health systems) were developed and distributed at various forums and conferences.

The release of *Global Health Watch 2* coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration of Alma Ata. To mark this anniversary, the WHO has released the 2008 *World Health Report* on the revitalisation of PHC. This year also sees the release of the report of the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. We believe *GHW 2* is important reading to accompany the official world health report.

However, as with *GHW 1*, this report has limitations. Many key issues relevant to health have not been covered. With space constraints, a limited budget and a small secretariat, we were simply unable to cover everything. Some of the data and analyses are also out of date. For example, the crisis around rising food prices occurred after the book was finalised.

Nonetheless, this book covers a range of issues and provides an alternative perspective that is vital to help the world move beyond the currently inadequate approaches and interventions to ensure that all people have their basic and essential health needs met.

We hope that the *Watch* provides some small contribution to ensuring that politicians, governments, donor agencies, banks and multilateral institutions are kept honest and held accountable.

People's Health Movement

Medact

Global Equity Gauge Alliance