



“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane”
(Martin Luther King, Jr)

POLICY BRIEF

Developing sustainable capacity for research on health equity and its social determinants in South Africa: an overview from the INTREC study

Funded by the European Commission
(FP7, Grant Agreement number 282605)

The INDEPTH Training and Research Centers of Excellence (INTREC) initiative was launched in January 2012. INTREC aims to address health inequities in Low and Middle Income Countries in Africa and Asia by: (i) developing a sustainable capacity for research for health and its social determinants and, (ii) facilitating translation of research findings into policy and practice in both regions

The INTREC consortium consists of six institutions. Five universities - (Umeå University in Sweden; Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia; Heidelberg University in Germany; the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands; and Harvard University in the USA), and INDEPTH -the International Network for the Demographic Evaluation of Populations and Their Health in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

Further information is available at:

www.intrec.info

This brief presents the findings from South Africa of the baseline situation analysis for INTREC.

Why Social Determinants of Health

Tackling economic, social, and health-related inequities is increasingly accepted as a core concern for the post-Millennium Development Goal framework, and this will involve addressing the Social Determinants of Health (SDH). However, there is a global dearth of high quality, policy-relevant, and actionable data on inequities within populations, which means that development solutions are seldom focused on the people who need them most.

To move the SDH agenda forward in South Africa, three questions must be addressed:

1. What are the key research issues regarding Social Determinants of Health that may be relevant in South Africa?
2. What are the training needs for research on adult health and social determinants?
3. Where are policy changes regarding social determinants of health needed?





“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane”
(Martin Luther King, Jr)

POLICY BRIEF

Developing sustainable capacity for research on health equity and its social determinants in South Africa: an overview from the INTREC study

Key Findings

SDH-related research issues:

- ✚ Research that measures the extent, gradient, and degree of health inequalities remains limited in SA, but is key to addressing SDH

SDH-related training issues:

- ✚ Some SDH-relevant training is available, but: (i) the training tends to be public-health-oriented rather than inclusive of the broader, multi-sectoral issues; (ii) the extent to which institutions can offer SDH-related training is limited by human resources that have the expertise to do this; and (iii) it is predominantly offered as classroom-based training, with few online teaching options

Key Findings

SDH-related policy issues:

- ✚ The pivotal National Development Plan (NDP):2030 launched in 2011 places SDH high on the political agenda as one of key strategies to reduce poverty and inequity in South Africa ¹
- ✚ Encouraging steps towards inter-sectoral action to address the social determinants have been taken (e.g. proposed health promotion fund) but coordinating and ensuring buy-in from all stakeholders is a foreseeable and critical challenge

¹ National Planning Commission. National Development Plan 2030. Pretoria: The Presidency, 2011
<http://www.npconline.co.za/pebble.asp?relid=25>

Recommendations for national and provincial stakeholders

- ✚ Inter-sectoral health policy should be organized around concrete objectives, with roles and responsibilities carefully defined, particularly regarding monitoring of key indicators
- ✚ Scale up investment in information systems to measure and appropriately address health inequities

Recommendations for training institutions

- ✚ Institutions of higher learning need to increase access to SDH training through permitting or even encouraging cross-faculty training in SDH-related issues
- ✚ As internet coverage continues to expand in SA, there is an opportunity to maximize coverage of SDH-related training through use of online platforms

Correspondence: john.kinsman@epiph.umu.se; Mandy.Maredza@wits.ac.za; hofman.karen@gmail.com