Health Equity Impact Assessment – what is it? Do we need it?

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Closing the gap in a generation

Health equity through action on the social determinants of health
CSDH – Closing the Gap in a Generation

• Institutionalize and strengthen technical capacities in health equity impact assessment of all international and national economic agreements

• competent, regular health equity impact assessment of all policy-making and market regulation should be institutionalized nationally and internationally

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Project aim

To define and test the key concepts underpinning Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA) and to ascertain the scope for a new HEIA methodology

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Project focus

The project was concerned with HIA of policy that affects the root causes or causes of the causes of health equity / inequities.

• Local: Must be applicable in disadvantaged areas, like Liverpool

• Global: Can a tool be devised that will assess transnational policy impact?

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Key tasks

• Scoping literature review
• Stakeholder mapping
• Interviews
• Liverpool workshop, 5-6 October 2009
• HIA09 workshop, Rotterdam, 16 October 2009

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Project definitions

Health inequalities / inequities are:
“Systematic, socially produced (and, therefore, avoidable or modifiable), unfair or unjust differences in health determinants or health outcomes between groups with different levels of underlying social advantage / disadvantage.”

Health equity:
“The absence of health inequalities / inequities.”

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Findings
Root causes

• Structural factors
• Politics and policy
• Access to affordable and reliable health care
• Power and control
• Injustice
• Language and culture
• Values

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Some global public policy determinants of health

• Processes and structures of global power relations
• Global power imbalances in the policy-making process
• ‘sites and forms of power which operate beyond the scope of democratic control’

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Some global public policy determinants of health

- Impact of global / cross-border flows on health (care) determinants
- Macroeconomic and other policies of multilateral agencies
- IMF lending conditionalities
- Human rights impacts of global public policies

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HIA - status quo

- Equity is not being addressed adequately within HIA
  - Mainly limited to differential impacts
  - Equity often not defined
  - Complex, difficult and time consuming
- Limited capacity
- Missed opportunities
  - Environmental justice and human rights

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Local barriers to equity in HIA

- Dominance of biomedicine / lack of awareness of social determinants
- Lack of local data to support equity analyses
- Lack of capacity within organisations
- Unsupportive political context
- Too burdensome

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Conclusions
HEIA?

We don’t need a new methodology

but

We do need methodological development

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Collaborative Research

Methodological / tools development

Process research

Pilot / case studies

Mapping

Evaluation and monitoring

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Global to local

Global network / strategy

Engagement with civil society and with Global South especially important

Capacity building

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• Peer reviewed publications
• Further research
  – *Liverpool: in discussions with LPCT*
  – *Europe: EU FP7 Bid*
  – *International links*
• **Strengthening equity within HIA in Liverpool**
  – *Inequalities Strategy*
  – *Capacity Building, Screening and HIA*
Root causes act locally, not just globally