The Pandemic Treaty, Universal Health Coverage and Climate and Health

By: Andres Coitiño, member of SHEM Steering Committee

From May 27 onward, the World Health Assembly (WHA) will discuss relevant issues for the future of global health. Three key topics are at stake: the pandemic treaty, the role of social participation in promoting universal health coverage (UHC), and the commitment to actions addressing the impact of climate crises on people's health. These discussions are anchored in principles of sustainability and health equity. At the onset of new global health binding instruments, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) convened to introduce the final version of the negotiated draft of the WHO agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. As emphasized by SHEM and the FCGH Alliance, a pandemic treaty must uphold health as a fundamental human right and set the stage for a broader treaty on the right to health. Revitalizing WHO's treaty-making capabilities, particularly if grounded in health and equity, the pandemic treaty could pave the way for a Framework Convention on Global Health (FCGH). Institutionalizing social participation in health systems is essential for achieving universal access and health equity. The discussion of a decision proposal on social participation for universal health coverage, health, and well-being will open a renewed opportunity to advocate for people's and community empowerment in health policy processes. Social participation has demonstrated its transformative impact on driving health policy and health systems reforms toward universal access and equity. This represents a strong global commitment to continue urging governments to "enable equitable, diverse, and inclusive participation" and to "ensure that social participation influences transparent decision-making for health throughout the policy cycle."

Finally, why do we need a new mandate on climate and health to build upon? After 14 years since the first WHA resolution on climate and health, and following the COP28 declaration, this new resolution has the potential to update evidence and support decision-makers in their national, regional, and global efforts to address the interactions between climate change and human health and well-being. For representatives of Member States and Non-state Actors who will be part of the discussion, it becomes relevant to consider the call for international organizations as outlined in the Sao Paulo Declaration on Planetary Health. "Overcome silos for an inclusive form of multilateralism that centers healthy people and a healthy planet and recognizes their interdependence. Cross-cutting, transdisciplinary cooperation is imperative to merge multiple agendas and strengthen the health-environment nexus. Work towards enhanced governance through the equitable influence of low-, middle- and high-income countries and the protection of human and environmental rights."
News from the field

**WHILE MEN EXERCISE THEIR ROTTEN POWERS, THE WORLD CONTINUES IN CRISES AND CONFLICTS**

Global health is being impacted by humanitarian and climate crises, and civil society organizations are addressing these issues in their actions. ActionAid and NGOs from over 20 countries have called on major international banks to stop financing fossil fuel production and industrial agriculture around the globe. Greenpeace criticized the G7 Climate, Energy, and Environment Ministers meeting, which concluded with a coal phase-out deadline that is too little too late and a further damaging endorsement of fossil gas. Greenpeace also drew attention to the growing threat the Russian oil shadow fleet posed, consisting of second-hand tankers transporting Russian oil to global markets. Along with 342 international organizations, Oxfam co-signed a letter that emphasized the potential of climate change to affect the spread and intensity of diseases due to temperature changes, environmental conditions, and extreme weather events. Rotary International was alerted to the need to address the impact of climate change on the mental health of people affected by disasters, which can exacerbate problems faced by vulnerable populations. The Planetary Health Alliance released the Kuala Lumpur Call to Action for Planetary Health, which includes a series of transdisciplinary and multi-dimensional commitments supported by a scientific evidence base. ACT reported that the global plastic pollution treaty discussions had become more focused, allowing the drafting of the treaty text, with negotiations set to conclude at the final meeting in November. Continue reading here.
ENDEAVOURS: Climate change and health - a global vision for joint action

Feeding into efforts to shape the global health architecture for addressing climate change, this roundtable will help define a plan to support countries to advance implementation, including of health outcomes and commitments from UN Climate Change Conferences (COPs).

Panelists will look ahead to COP29 in Azerbaijan and COP30 in Brazil, and reflect on how to build on the pioneering efforts by the UAE for COP28. Also on the agenda will be the climate and health resolution expected to be adopted at the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly and the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health.

Saturday 1 June 2024
13:00–14:15 CEST.
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At SHEM we link citizens, public health and healthcare advocates, scientists, academics, and related institutions from all regions, cultures, and ideologies pursuing the universal right to health. We aim to promote sustainable health equity as an ethical principle that guides all national and international economic, social, and environmental policies.

SHEM’s Highlights Curators: Andre Luis Sales, Diana Zeballos, Gustavo Buss