

## CIVIL SOCIETY BRAINSTORMING MEETING, 20 JANUARY 2017

# “Let’s talk: Economic determination of health policies and governance”

### 1. BACKGROUND AND POSITIONING

At a recent Skype conversation on planning civil society events ahead of the 140<sup>th</sup> Session of the WHO EB in January 2017, participants “welcomed a proposal by the Geneva Global Health Hub (G2H2) to have, in addition to the WHO Watch preparatory workshop (16-20 January) and the “traditional” civil society strategy meeting on key EB agenda items (proposed for Saturday 21 January), another full day meeting to be used for a “semi-structured” conversation about basic references and objectives of our political work beyond and below the thematic silos and EB agenda items.

### References

References for such a brainstorming meeting can be found in the “Delhi Consultation” in May 2012” when “representatives of organizations working on campaigns for health and social justice, of academia, governments and multilateral institutions gathered (...) to address the need for an effective and accountable global governance for health” and in the strategic meeting on global health and governance for health “Strengthening the Right to Health: Shared Issues? Shared Analysis” held in Rome, in October 2013.

Also a recent workshop organized by FIAN and a coalition of civil society organizations (Geneva, October 2016) on “the role of Peoples’ sovereignty, national States and human rights in national, and international governance: the challenge of radicalizing democracy and regulating mega political and economic powers” and the report “Transforming Global Governance in the Post-2015 Era: Towards an Equitable and Sustainable World” by Nora McKeon on a “dialogic symposium that brought academics from a wide range of disciplines together with practitioners and activists” in March 2016 found our great attention.

These events have been quite diverse, but all of them provided, within a roughly defined structure (place, time slot, invited participants, title, outline and program) an open and democratic space for joint reflection and brainstorming, learning and sharing among activists engaged in global health (in a broad, interdisciplinary sense) but coming from various background. From what we have experienced and read, it is the quality of these conversations and not the concrete outcome in terms of agreed strategies, plans or statements that makes them remarkable.

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*“We build a coherent, progressive and strong civil society space in Geneva for more democratic global health governance.”*

In this sense, we also propose to reconsider “effectiveness” of civil society collaboration. Only focusing on particular processes, topics on the agenda of WHO governing body meetings and related immediate strategizing and advocacy, we are not effective. In order to overcome a mostly reactive way of working, we need to have more interaction on the complex realities and political agendas behind these processes and topics, toward the identification of common drivers and determinants, and possible synergies between different sectoral and intersectoral struggles and strategies. This requires a discussion of global health as a complex, interrelated, organic and holistic field.

## 2. FORMAT: AN OPEN BRAINSTORMING MEETING

With the format of an open brainstorming meeting, we mainly want to create a space for reflection and interaction and think through issues together. In particular, we refer to the Japanese “Ba” concept - a physical or virtual collaborative space where participants feel safe and exchange insights.

We suggest to provide only a rough structure (theme, starting points and/or leading questions, facilitators) and not to replicate the “experts” – “public” modus of providing initial input and inviting for replies. Moving into a debating mode, all participants are experts and committed to engage in a dialogue.

### Expected outcomes

- Deeper understanding of the theme discussed and each other’s approaches and positions
- Laying the ground for more concrete strategizing (Saturday civil society meeting) and future cooperation (synergies between different sectoral and intersectoral struggles and strategies)

## 3. “ECONOMIC DETERMINATION OF HEALTH POLICIES AND GOVERNANCE”

As a theme for the January meeting, we propose “Let’s talk: Economic determination of health policies and governance”. We collected some references (as below) and herewith share them with invited participants. Taking up your initial feedback, these references will be afterwards translated into a proper introduction and a set of “leading questions” to structure the conversation.

### Initial references

- An **overall “management” approach to policies and planning**: Everything is now about monitoring and accountability and there are enthusiastic debates on data requirements and outcome indicators which replace a sound political dialogue on what is the problem (including diverging interest of key actors), what change is exactly needed and how to achieve it. What are the implications of the transition from human rights accountability to mutual accountability and multistakeholderism? Take UHC or AMR as examples. “New Public Management” was introduced by Thatcher as a tool for privatization, deregulation and depoliticization, and this is what we experience today. How to cope with the privatization of policy making?
- The **“marketing” approach on positioning WHO** (and other organizations) within a global health governance system. According to most of the WHO DG candidates, the organization must become more efficient, must provide “value for money” and clearly position itself and its programs in a strategic niche. But what WHO do we want? And how much money (debate on increasing assessed contributions) and what leadership (election of new DG) are needed for this WHO we want? And who should pay for it?

- A remarkable re-emergence of the **macroeconomic discourse in global health policies**: The “investment case” for health (examples: UHC, health workforce) has become absolutely dominating in political fora and leading publications. This “selling argument” is tempting, as it shows some good results. So how to deal with this discourse and its ambivalence? How to defend the case for health as a human right or as a shared responsibility (global good) – among ourselves and publicly?
- We all know about the **domination of “big money” in setting the global health agenda** for which there are numerous examples and references. Just to mention a few: Rich countries’ security interest led to better crisis management (Ebola) instead of creating strong health systems; with FENSA, WHO accommodates corporate lobbyists in WHO governance processes; the vertical “partnership” and “multi-stakeholder” mode of dealing with global health issues has become mainstream. – How to defend multilateralism and how to promote the voices and interests of people?
- ...and finally: **Economic power and economic determination of civil society processes and voices**: who sits at our tables and in the big global fora? How to overcome the imbalance in deliberation and representation?

#### 4. HOST, PARTICIPANTS, DATE

The Geneva Global Health Hub (G2H2) project set up by a group of civil society organizations in 2016 intends to “contribute to longer-term strategic thinking and coherent and sustained action by civil society entities involved in global health advocacy” (quoted from the G2H2 project proposal). Together with other structures and services provided by G2H2, the proposed brainstorming meeting (and hopefully a series of follow-up meetings continuing the conversation) would perfectly express this ambition.

The meeting will take place on Friday 20 January 2017 as part of a week of civil society events ahead of EB140 promoted jointly by G2H2 and partners including PHM and TWN.

The meeting will be completed (later afternoon and evening) by a short information meeting on the state of the G2H2 project and the plans for 2017 and a reception celebrating the launch of the project and the opening of the G2H2 office. An informal buffet dinner at the venue of the meeting will allow a continued dialogue among the participants.

#### 5. FURTHER PLANNING AND PREPARATION

...done by Garance and Thomas (and supported by Flavio) who will also jointly facilitate the meeting

...collecting and taking up further input by colleagues: Contact us via [info@g2h2.org](mailto:info@g2h2.org)

...as part of a broader team planning the civil society events in January 2017

**CIVIL SOCIETY MEETINGS AHEAD OF WHO EB 140: OVERVIEW AND REGISTRATION FORM**

[www.g2h2.org/posts/event/january2017/](http://www.g2h2.org/posts/event/january2017/)