Final announcement, 24 January 2020
http://g2h2.org/posts/january2020/

SID
Society for International Development

G2H2 GENEVA GLOBAL HEALTH HUB

31 January 2020, first day of civil society meeting ahead of WHO EB 146

HEALTH HEARTBEATS IN THE AGE OF FINANCIAL ACCUMULATION AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

This Friday afternoon workshop and brainstorming meeting is organized by the Society for International Development (SID) and convened by the Geneva Global Health Hub (G2H2) as part of the civil society meeting ahead of the 146th Session of the WHO Executive Board. The programme is based on a call to G2H2 members to propose topics for a full or half day workshop.

The workshop refers to an agenda item of the 146h Session of the WHO Executive Board (Data and innovation: draft global strategy on digital health, item 20, document EB146/26), and links it with a policy field neglected in the public debate: the overexpansion of the finance industry into the health sector.

The workshop is set up as a "brainstorming meeting", and this implies that there will be no clear distinction between "those who know" and "those who learn". The workshop shall mainly be a place for sharing analysis, approaches and positions, and for listening and mutual learning. If all works well, this might lay the ground for a continued conversation among civil society actors, fostering synergies between different sectoral and intersectoral struggles and strategies.

The workshop is open for members of the Geneva Global Health Hub and interested civil society colleagues. Registration is free. Find details on logistics and registration (deadline: 27 January) on the last page of this announcement, and get back to the G2H2 Secretariat (logistics) or to SID (programme) for any enquiries.

INTRODUCTION

The right to health is at a crossroad. The increasing pressure of financial arguments, financial actors and financial institutions in all aspects of the economy and society has produced a radical transformation in the way governments provide public services such as healthcare. Households have become increasingly reliant on financial products to meet their basic needs, in correlation with the varying withdrawal of state support in such domains as health, social security, pensions, education. While the stimulus to private financial capital into the healthcare sector is not new, healthcare markets are currently growing with very little concerns for their long-term effects on health and equity.

Picture: Cover of the chapter "Making health a global bankable project". In: Spotlight on financial justice (Citizens for Financial Justice, 2019)

Biotechnology and data science are reconfiguring nearly all aspects of peoples' lives, and health is no exception. Advances like big data and artificial intelligence are opening up new revolutionary pathways to managing people's health, and healthcare service delivery. Precision medicine approaches have received new significant investments over the last decade, to create new therapies, learn more about disease processes and potentially prevent diseases before they arise. However, such major financial investments in biotechnology may come at the expense of existing public health measures that could have a greater impact on people's health, especially when tackling burgeoning public health concerns like obesity, cancer, and other chronic diseases, as well as re-emergence of infectious pandemics. Moreover, there are fundamental ethical questions that are being raised around the potential use, when not outright exploitation, of the human body, in terms of its commodification for financial purposes and for political and social control. The age of cyborg has begun, and the consequences cannot be known.

Health digitalization may indeed be leveraged to improve the right to health among the most vulnerable populations. Socially responsible technologies may assist medical practice with cheaper and quick-fix solutions that help cater to the needs of populations in low and middle-income countries where workforce shortages and structural gaps of the national health systems constrain the access to and quality of care. Yet, challenges in developing and implementing digital applications remain largely unaddressed, including in the governance frameworks, so that is it not clear whether this type of innovation is in reality aligned with public health interest, on potentially in conflict with its goals. How can the upcoming WHO strategy on digital health provide a window of opportunity to steer digital health toward the public health outcomes we want to see?

PROGRAMME
FRIDAY, 31 JANUARY 2020

13.30	Coffee and tea available at the WCC cafeteria
14.00	**Welcome, introduction**
Session 1	**MAKING HEALTH A BANKABLE PROJECT**
14.00 - 15.30	**Presentation of the health chapter in the "Spotlight Report on Financial Justice** Introductions by • Nicoletta Dentico, Global Health Programme, Society for International Development • Anna Mariott, Public Services Policy Manager, Oxfam UK (via Skype) • Denise Namburete, Executive Director, N'weti, Moçambique (via Skype) Followed by plenary discussion Reference: Health chapter in the Spotlight report
Session 2	**ALL YOU NEED IS A LINK!**
15.30 - 17.30	**Digital technologies and the politics of life** Introductions by • Stefano Prato, Managing Director Society for International Development • Parminder Jeet Singh, Executive Director IT For Change • Bernardo Mariano Junior, Director Digital Health and Innovation, WHO Followed by plenary discussion Reference: Document EB146/26

CIVIL SOCIETY MEETINGS IN GENEVA
31 JANUARY AND 1 FEBRUARY 2020

Friday afternoon, 31 January 2020: Civil society workshop
Health Heartbeats in the Age of Financial Accumulation and Digital Technology

Saturday, 1 February 2020: Series of briefings and dialogue sessions
Civil society perspectives on selected global health topics

Online programme, updates, enquiries

- A programme update for both days will be sent to registered participants ahead of the meeting
- Meeting website: http://g2h2.org/posts/january2020/
- Enquiries about the Friday programme: Nicoletta Dentico, SID
- Enquiries about logistics and registration: Thomas Schwarz, G2H2

Registration is requested for all sessions on both days
Deadline: Tuesday, 28 January 2020

- Register here: http://g2h2.org/posts/january2020/
- Registration for the Friday session is free.
  For the Saturday session(s), non-members are requested to pay a small registration fee.

VENUE

Ecumenical Centre, Route de Ferney 150, Grand-Saconnex, Geneva

How to get there: From the Cornavin railway station or the Airport, take bus No. 5 (direction Airport) or bus No. 28 (direction Vernier). From the Airport, take bus No. 5 (direction Thônex). Leave the bus at Crêts-Morrillon. The entrance is at Route des Morillons 1.

GENEVA GLOBAL HEALTH HUB

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The Geneva Global Health Hub (G2H2) set up in 2016 intends to contribute to longer-term strategic thinking and coherent and sustained action by civil society entities involved in global health advocacy.

"We build a strong civil society space in Geneva
for more democratic global health governance."