

The Story Behind the Logo: Global Goals, Local Actions

Understanding Interconnections: Structural and Social Determinants Shaping and Global Health



Achieving Equity



The World Health Organization defines equity as “the absence of unfair, avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined demographically, or geographically or by other dimensions of inequality (e.g. sex, gender, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation)” (World Health Organization, 2025b). Achieving health equity begins with intersectional, community-driven action that challenges power structures and centers marginalized voices.

The Leave No One Behind principle calls for prioritizing the most marginalized, shifting power away from external actors, and recognizing that justice requires greater investment in marginalized populations, as health is a fundamental human right (Oehring & Gunasekera, 2024).



Environment

Our social, environmental, and political conditions shape health.

The deep and inseparable connection between people and their environment forms the foundation of a socio-ecological approach to health. A core guiding principle for the global community is promoting mutual care: looking after one another, our communities, and the natural world. Preserving natural resources must be recognized and upheld as a shared global responsibility.

Vulnerable populations, for example, are the most impacted by access to safe housing and are more likely to live in unsafe conditions (Colour of Poverty-Colour of Change, 2019; World Health Organization, 2025c).



Partnership & Collaboration

Effective methods to improve global health and reduce inequities require partnership and collaboration. This can be collaboration for local, national, global, or intersectoral policies (Government of NL, 2015).

Connecting and coordinating services and supports across the health and social sectors allows for improved care and focuses on upstream solutions rather than simply treating symptoms. Improving access to comprehensive services and supports will ensure that every individual, family, and community has the support they need, when and where they need it (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Health and Community Services, 2015).

Collaboration on a local level can start with inclusion policies – for example, the Baby-Friendly Council of Newfoundland implementing the Baby-Friendly Initiative, a global campaign of the WHO and UNICEF. The campaign recognizes that implementing collaborative, evidence-based practices in health and community services is crucial to the success of programs that protect, promote, and support breastfeeding (Baby-Friendly Newfoundland & Labrador, 2025).

Hands of the Future

The hands holding up the earth demonstrate unique cultural identities worldwide, creating shared health goals for all. The hands represent the future of global health, ensuring that health policies are created from the bottom up, at the local level, drawing on the strengths of communities to address root causes to mitigate health consequences in the future.

Structural Determinants of Health: Addressing Root Causes

The structural determinants of health are the interplay between socioeconomics, political context, and structural mechanisms that create hierarchical groups within society (World Health Organization, 2024).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by UN members in 2015, includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals. These goals recognize that addressing structural and social determinants must be combined with strategies to improve health and reduce inequities (United Nations, 2025).

Education and Global Health



Education empowers individuals to advocate for their rights, access health care, and participate in shaping systems that can positively affect their lives. Higher levels of education are linked to better health outcomes, greater economic opportunities, and increased life expectancy. However, access to education remains unequal, perpetuating cycles of poverty, discrimination, and poor health (Raghupathi & Raghupathi, 2020).

In global health, investing in education means more than expanding access; it means valuing diverse forms of knowledge, dismantling exclusionary hierarchies, and ensuring every voice is heard (Sharman, 2021).

Empowering communities to engage in lifelong learning is essential for preparing individuals for all stages of life. This must be supported across educational, home, workplace, and community settings (World Health Organization, 1986).

The Planet

The Earth shows the global impact of our actions. This is seen particularly in climate change.

The direct effects of climate change, such as an increase in heat-related illnesses, and indirect effects, such as malnutrition resulting from rising food prices, are mediated by the social and environmental determinants of health. Factors such as inadequate housing, limited access to clean water and sanitation, and exclusion from healthcare systems increase vulnerability to climate-related risks, like heatwaves, food insecurity, vector-borne diseases, waterborne diseases and non-communicable diseases. (Chaudhry, 2024).

The World Health Organization estimates that climate change will cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year between 2030 and 2050 (World Health Organization, 2025a).

Strengthening infrastructure, community capacity, and government collaboration is crucial for building resilience in vulnerable populations and tackling the impact of climate change on global health (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, & United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2024).

DNA (Genetics)



Genetics account for 10% of our health outcomes (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2022).

Due to modern innovations, healthcare workers can use genetic technology to identify individuals who may be vulnerable to developing genetic disorders. Global health aims to identify and implement technologies that improve health outcomes worldwide (Mayo Clinic, 2020).

Lily of the Valley

(Convallaria majalis)

The Lily of the Valley is seen as a symbol of equal treatment of all individuals, reflected in how it grows with uniformity and balance. The stem is completely upright, with blossoms at equal width and height apart from each other, symbolizing equality (Elrod, 2025). The Lily of the Valley's small, bell-shaped white flowers are commonly regarded as symbols of purity, innocence, and renewal (Elrod, 2025).

This flower is associated with advocating different forms of social justice throughout history, such as the suffragette movement and racial equality (Elrod, 2025). Overall, its symmetrical form makes this flower a fitting symbol of the shared hope and optimism for a more just and equitable world (Elrod, 2025).

References provided on request from the Global Health Nursing Committee, Memorial University, 2025.

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