

## **Health, Human Capital and Economic Growth Research Project (Phase 2)**

# **Workshop: Research on Health, Human Capital and Economic Growth**

August 15 and 16, 2002  
PAHO  
Washington DC.

### **ACTIVITY BRIEF**

#### **Background**

In the past decade new research has expanded our capability of understanding the role and importance of investments in health for long term economic growth and social development: the reduction of poverty and inequalities. In recent years seminal conceptual and analytical frameworks have shed new light on the long term impact of nutrition, and health status of the population on long term economic growth and social development. A recent report of a WHO Commission on Macro-Economics and Health and the studies developed under Phase I of the Health and Growth Project takes stock of the progress on these areas of research<sup>1</sup>.

However there is still a gap to bridge between advances in the theory and development of policy decisions regarding the long term impact of improvements in nutrition and health and long term economic development. Much more need to be done to document, empirically, the long term impact of improvements in the nutrition and health status throughout the life cycle of individuals and populations – quality and longevity, and long term economic performance and social development.

#### **Purpose of the Workshop**

The purpose of the workshop will discuss the type of empirical research that should be promoted to better document the relationships between changes in nutrition and health status on long term economic growth and social development. We will discuss and exchange ideas on the state of the art on these topics the challenges and opportunities of this type of research. We will focus the discussions on the type of variables and data sources that can be used to analyze different aspects of the transmission mechanisms by which improvements in nutrition and health status of the population will affect the quality and longevity of human capital, the rate of accumulation of human capital and the long term economic growth and development. The Workshop will provide an opportunity to

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<sup>1</sup> Most of these works are included in the reports of the project on Health and Economic Growth Phase 1 Project (Investments in Health: Social and Economic Returns, Scientific and Technical Publications No. 582, Pan American Health Organization; Washington, D.C., 2001; and Health for Wealth; Inter American Development Bank -IADB, Washington, D.C., 2000) and in a recent report of the WHO's Commission on Macroeconomics and Health; December 2001.

discuss conceptual and methodological issues regarding the development of empirical research related to the Case Studies of this project (See below).

***Case Studies on Health, Human Capital and Economic Growth:  
Country/Regional Experiences***

Four (4) Country/Regional case studies will analyze the impact of differences in the health status of the population, measured in terms of nutritional status, Body Mass Index (BMI) and other health status indicators, on the accumulation of human capital and long-term economic growth. Studies will document the empirical evidence of major changes in health status indicators over long periods of time - longitudinal studies, as well as the differences in these health status indicators among different income groups at a given point in time - cross sectional studies. The case studies will analyze the likely impact of differences in the health status on the accumulation of human capital on income inequalities and long-term economic growth. Studies will explore the impact of these differentials in the health status on the rate of depreciation of human capital over the life cycle of different socioeconomic groups. The researcher will discuss the type of health interventions more likely to have produced long-lasting effects in reducing the rate of depreciation of the stock of human capital of the country and different socioeconomic groups. Researchers will discuss the implications of findings for sustainability of poverty alleviation programs as well as on the hypothesis of income convergence/non-convergence in endogenous economic growth models.

The four country/regional case studies will cover countries of the Latin American and Caribbean grouped by sub-region: Mercosur, Andean Countries, Mexico and Central America and the Caribbean.

**Follow-up Activities**

The Pan American Health Organization contemplates to provide four research grants for case studies and applied research in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. You will be invited to submit proposal for these research grants. Also, you are encouraged to submit papers on Health, Growth, Inequality and Poverty to the Global Development Network Awards and Medals program. A prize (US\$ 5,000 dollars) to the best paper on Health and Economic Growth will be awarded under the 2002 Theme and Development Award Topic (i) Growth, Inequality and Poverty ([www.gdnet.org/sub-pages/events\\_global.html](http://www.gdnet.org/sub-pages/events_global.html)).