

A social research agenda on globalization and infectious diseases in Latin America

The Special Program for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) at the World Health Organization (WHO) has a history of nearly 30 years in fostering basic and applied social science research on infectious tropical diseases and their control (<http://www.who.int/tdr>; <http://www.who.int/tdr/topics/social-research/default.htm>).

In 2000, the TDR Program established a Steering Committee on Strategic Social, Economic, and Behavioral Research (SEB). The Steering Committee was mandated to promote and support social research that identifies constraints in, and opportunities for, infectious disease control and prevention in resource-poor settings by elucidating social, cultural, economic, health-systems, and policy-related factors and proposing strategic solutions to such barriers in disease control and public health. From the outset, the Committee decided to place a particular focus on “upstream” social science research addressing large-scale, “transnational” issues and challenges related to infectious diseases and their control, including globalization (Saker L, Lee K, Cannito B, Gilmore A, Campbell-Lendrum D. Globalization and infectious diseases: a review of the linkages. http://www.who.int/tdr/publications/publications/seb_topic3.htm) and resulting social inequalities.

In October 2003, with financial support from the TDR Program, the Steering Committee conceived an international workshop-symposium entitled *Inequalities, Globalization, and the Resurgence of Infectious Diseases in Latin America*. The workshop, held in Angra dos Reis, Brazil, prior to the 7th Latin American Conference on Social Science and Health, was organized in collaboration with the Social Sciences Laboratory (LACSO), Caracas, Venezuela, and the National School of Public Health, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The workshop drew more than 20 scholars from throughout Latin America, joined by international experts from other regions of the world. Presentations on a wide range of topics were enriched by group discussions. The workshop produced a draft research agenda on the effects of globalization and social inequalities on infectious diseases. The articles presented in this special issue are revised peer-reviewed versions of some of the papers presented at the workshop and include two additional papers that were solicited afterwards.

The articles in this special issue embody the Steering Committee’s thrust and ambition to foster evidence on the links between large-scale processes like globalization, poverty, and social inequalities and negative health outcomes like infectious diseases at the individual level.

Roberto Briceño-León

Laboratorio de Ciencias Sociales (LACSO), Caracas, Venezuela.

Comité de Dirección para la Investigación Estratégica, Social, Económica y Ética,

Programa Especial para la Investigación y Capacitación sobre Enfermedades Tropicales, Organización Mundial de la Salud.

bricenoleon@yahoo.com

Johannes Sommerfeld

Comité de Dirección para la Investigación Estratégica, Social, Económica y Ética,

Programa Especial para la Investigación y Capacitación en Enfermedades Tropicales, Organización Mundial de la Salud.

sommerfeldj@who.int