

Plenary session on Health research and development: what issues after the 2001 Report of the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health and the Millennium Development Goals

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A report card on G8 health and development commitments in the context of Nepad

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This research, funded by the Canadian International Development Research Centre, developed a Report Card on G8 health and development commitments over the past three G8 summits, leading up to the 2002 Kananaskis Summit in Canada. Summit texts were analyzed and coded for specific (quantitative and discrete) and normative (generic and ideological) commitments. These commitments were organized into a number of categories (e.g. health and health services, education, agriculture and food security, environment, development assistance, debt relief) representing direct and indirect health determinants. Measures were developed for the commitments, and data for these measures obtained from numerous official sources (World Bank, UN Agency, OECD, WHO, government documents) and independent sources (NGOs and independent researchers). Unlike other G8 reporting methods (i.e. the Canadian-based Centre for G8 Research at the University of Toronto), our research did not examine simply compliance (did the wealthy countries do what they promised?), but also the adequacy of the commitment to the problem (is the committed education assistance enough to meet the Dakar Framework targets?), and its relationship to other commitments (e.g. how does development assistance for agricultural or food security support or conflict with trade barriers to food exports, domestic G8 food subsidies, commitments to environmental sustainability, and so on?). Generally, G8 countries had only modest compliance to commitments that, in turn, were woefully inadequate to the task, although there is considerable variance amongst G8 countries and some areas of positive development. However, aid to health systems, education and overall development – especially untied aid – has dropped in recent years, and there has been considerable backsliding from even three years ago. In parallel with analyses of G8 summit documents and performance, an initial analysis and critique of the Nepad (New Partnership for African Development) was also undertaken. Our final Report Card integrates key areas where Nepad and G8 commitments overlap or conflict, an assessment of Nepad claims and policies relative to the health and development needs of African nations, and an addendum Report focusing on an internalist critique of Nepad.

Our Report Card now forms the basis for proposed ongoing research collaboration between Canadian and African researchers that will improve and apply the assessment methodology over the next 3 years of G8 summitry, African nations' pro-globalization policy developments and G8/African trade and development transactions. Our intent is to examine the extent to which G8 and Nepad commitments are followed, and whether they make a difference (and in the right direction) in the economic, environmental and human health indicators claimed by proponents of greater global market integration from both sets of nations (G8 and African).