Call for submission of evidence

The health impact of trade and investment agreements

Background

The Independent Panel on Global Governance for Health1 (‘the Panel’), established for an initial period of three years, is a collaborative initiative between the University of Oslo and The Lancet, following the recommendations of The Lancet-University of Oslo Commission on Global Governance for Health, which reported in February 20142.

The objective of the Panel is to provide evidence, based on high quality, independent research and analysis, which can be used to inform and impact on political processes that influence global health. The legitimacy and authority of the Panel are based on the independence and academic quality of its work.

The Panel is supported by an Advisory Board, chaired by the Former Chair of the Commission, Ole Petter Ottersen (President of the University of Oslo). Members of the Advisory Board and the Panel have been nominated by him, subject to approval by former members of the Commission. The topic to be addressed by the Panel each year is decided in agreement with the Advisory Board.

Members of the Panel

Desmond McNeill (Chair), a political economist, is professor and Director of the Research School at the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) at the University of Oslo.

Alicia Bárcena is the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and former Chef de Cabinet to the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

Carolyn Deere-Birkbeck is Senior Researcher at the University of Oxford's Global Economic Governance Programme and founder and Chair of the Board of Intellectual Property Watch.

Sakiko Fukuda Parr is professor of International Affairs at the New School, New York. She was the lead author and director of the UNDP Development Reports 1995-2004.

Anand Grover is a designated Senior Advocate practicing in the Supreme Court of India, the Director of Lawyers Collective, and former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health (2008-2014).

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1 [https://www.uio.no/english/research/interfaculty-research-areas/globalgov/globalgov-for-health/](https://www.uio.no/english/research/interfaculty-research-areas/globalgov/globalgov-for-health/)
Call for evidence

The Panel is preparing a report to be published in The Lancet later in 2015. The topic is the implications for health and the social determinants of health of trade and investment treaties, agreements, and negotiation processes.

International trade and investment agreements can have major effects – both positive and negative – on people’s health and wellbeing. The effects can be broad, for example on agriculture, the availability and safety of food, and employment; the agreements can also affect health directly, for example through rules that can impact access to and availability of drugs, labelling of food, or environmental regulation. A critical issue is the effect of trade and investment agreements on policy space: ‘the freedom, scope, and mechanisms that governments have to choose, design, and implement public policies to fulfill their aims’. These agreements are formalized and interpreted according to legal procedures that are complex and technical. Powerful states and corporations exert a strong influence on the outcome because of the greater resources they bring to the negotiating table. As a result, affected communities and stakeholders may be excluded from the process.

Panel members share responsibility for writing the report, but may also draw on contributions from other researchers and experts. The Panel hereby invites submissions of evidence on this topic from all interested parties - academia, civil society, business, public administration etc.

We are particularly interested to receive your submissions on the following themes:

- The impacts of trade and investment agreements, and negotiation processes on:
  - environmental, workplace health, safety and labelling standards;
  - growing trade in unhealthy commodities (e.g. tobacco, ultra-processed foods);
  - employment, livelihoods and working conditions in ways that influence health; and
  - national policy space for regulating in favour of public health, including domestic procurement policies, research and development, laws and practices relevant to health.
- Power imbalances:
  - asymmetries in negotiations of trade and investment agreements and their interpretation;
  - limited stakeholder participation and non-transparency;
  - ‘democratic deficits’ in trade and investment policy making.
- ‘Pros and cons’:
  - examples of ways in which the current international trade and investment regime falls short of a theoretical ideal;
  - examples of ways in which trade and investment agreements do, or could, improve people’s health and well-being.

Format:

Submissions may be in various forms, ranging from peer-reviewed research papers to qualitative or quantitative evidence of the implications for health and the social determinants of health of trade and investment treaties, agreements, and negotiation processes. We also welcome descriptive essays, personal stories, news and media articles, visual items etc.

Submissions should describe the context, methods, and processes involved in gathering the evidence; specific lessons; and wider global lessons. Submissions may also include recommendations for action; these should be as specific as possible, with regard to identified actors, processes etc.

Please send your submission to: globalgovhealth-contact@sum.uio.no

Deadline: submissions should be received by 30th April 2015.