

## Joining Together to Combat Poverty

*Iona Heath<sup>1</sup>, Andy Haines<sup>2</sup>, Zoran Malenica<sup>3</sup>, Judith A. Oulton<sup>4</sup>, Zorayda Leopando<sup>5</sup>, Dan Kaseje<sup>6</sup>, Whitney W. Addington<sup>7</sup>, Olivier Giscard d'Estaing<sup>8</sup>, James K. Tumwine<sup>9</sup>, Meri Koivusalo<sup>10</sup>, Gillian Biscoe<sup>11</sup>, Pat Nickson<sup>12</sup>, Matko Marušić<sup>13</sup>, Stanimir Vuk Pavlović<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Intercollegiate Forum on Poverty and Health, London; <sup>2</sup>Department of Primary Care and Population Sciences, Royal Free and University College Medical School, London, United Kingdom; <sup>3</sup>University of Split Law School, Split, Croatia; <sup>4</sup>The International Council of Nurses, Geneva, Switzerland; <sup>5</sup>Asia-Pacific, World Alliance of National Colleges and Academies of Family Medicine and Family Practice (WONCA), Manila, The Philippines; <sup>6</sup>Africa Community Action Network for Health (AFRI-CAN), Nairobi, Kenya; <sup>7</sup>The American College of Physicians, The American Society of Internal Medicine, Chicago, Ill, USA; <sup>8</sup>BUSCO, Business Council to the UN, Paris, France; <sup>9</sup>Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Makerere University Medical School, Kampala, Uganda; <sup>10</sup>Globalism and Social Policy Programme, National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, Helsinki, Finland; <sup>11</sup>The Bellettes Bay Company Inc., Hobart, Tasmania, Australia; <sup>12</sup>Institut Pan Africain de Santé Communautaire, Nyankunde, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; <sup>13</sup>Croatian Medical Journal, Zagreb University School of Medicine, Zagreb, Croatia; and <sup>14</sup>Mayo Clinic Cancer Center, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn, USA

The International Poverty and Health Network (IPHN) was created in December 1997 following a series of conferences organized by the World Health Organization, with the aim of integrating health into plans to eradicate poverty. Around 1.3 billion people live on less than US\$1 per day. Of the 4.4 billion people in developing countries nearly 60% lack access to sanitation, 30% do not have clean water, 20% have no health care, and 20% do not have enough dietary energy and protein. Even among rich nations there are gross socioeconomic inequalities. Many children are robbed of their physical and mental potential through poverty. Expressed in constant 1963 US dollars, an average Croatian family needed the annual income of US\$894 to meet the poverty line in 1960 and US\$9,027 in 1995. Accordingly, 9-25% of Croatian households were below the poverty line between 1960 and 1995. The increase in the poverty rate after 1991 was compounded by the war that destroyed almost a third of industrial capacity and infrastructure. Dissipation of the communist economy and inadequate privatization have contributed to the increase in unemployment rate, corruption, and other social ills. IPHN invited Croatian Medical Journal to publish this editorial to help push the issue of poverty up political and medical agendas on a global level. We argue that a factor contributing to the failure of most large-scale programs against poverty to date is the excessive emphasis on material and infrastructure assistance at the expense of spiritual, moral, and intellectual development.

Key words: child welfare; Croatia; cultural deprivation; health campaigns; indigency; life expectancy; low income population; medically underserved area; poverty; socioeconomic factors