

## NOTE ON THE '10/90 GAP'

Many of the essays refer to the '10/90 gap' and authors understand this concept in different ways. Rather than footnote each of these references, the Global Forum adds this general note to clarify the origin and significance of this term.

In 1990, the Commission on Health Research for Development estimated that only about 5% of the world's resources for health research (which totaled US\$ 30 billion in 1986) were being applied to the health problems of developing countries, where 93% of the world's burden of 'preventable mortality' occurred. Some years later, the term '10/90 gap' was coined to capture this major imbalance between the magnitude of the problem and the resources devoted to addressing it.

Since then, the landscape of health research for development has changed in important ways:

- global expenditure on health research has more than quadrupled to over US\$ 125 billion in 2003;
- there are many more actors engaged in funding or conducting health research relevant to the needs of developing countries;
- but the epidemiology of diseases has shifted substantially, so that many developing countries are now experiencing high burdens of noncommunicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke, as well as continuing high burdens of infectious diseases and injuries.

As a result of these changes, the total global expenditure applied to research relevant to all the health problems of developing countries cannot be estimated with any meaningful degree of accuracy.

Nevertheless, studies by the Global Forum for Health Research and others continue to demonstrate that health research applied to the needs of developing countries remains grossly under-resourced in many areas and the term '10/90 gap', while not representing a current quantitative measure, has become a symbol of the continuing mismatch between needs and investments.

Since its foundation in 1998, the work of the Global Forum for Health Research has focused on helping to redress this imbalance.