

# CHAIN at a Glance 2019

Through 2019, CHAIN made progress in its mission to create a global transformation in actionable health inequalities research. In April 2019, CHAIN hosted its kick-off meeting in Trondheim with partners from international public health organizations and leading global health scholars. Since receiving major funding from the Research Council's BEDREHELSE and FRIPRO programs in late 2018, CHAIN has been busy developing its multi-year strategic plan and continuing to deepen research and advocacy partnerships on health and its social determinants across entire populations and in vulnerable populations within nations.

## Major projects at CHAIN

- Global Health Inequalities
- Trade, Labour Market and Health
- Health Inequalities and Technology – HEALTech
- Ethnicity and health in South Africa
- Health Inequalities in European Welfare States – HiNEWS
- Health Inequalities in migrant population – MIGHEAL
- Refugee health in Greece – REHEAL
- European Social Survey 7 Health Module

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## CHAIN Kick-Off Meeting, April 2019, Trondheim

As Norway's first and only center for the study of social inequalities in health, CHAIN was thrilled to hold its kick-off meeting in Trondheim, 9-10 April, as an opportunity for our international network to meet one another, exchange knowledge, and plan our priorities for our collaborative work in the years to come. At the meeting, the group discussed CHAIN's three major pillars: monitoring, evaluating, and reducing global inequalities in health. Geographical coverage, different life stages with a priority on childhood, and intersectionality link our work across the pillars. We are excited to work with this talented network in the coming years as we link research, policy, and practice to address social inequalities in health globally.



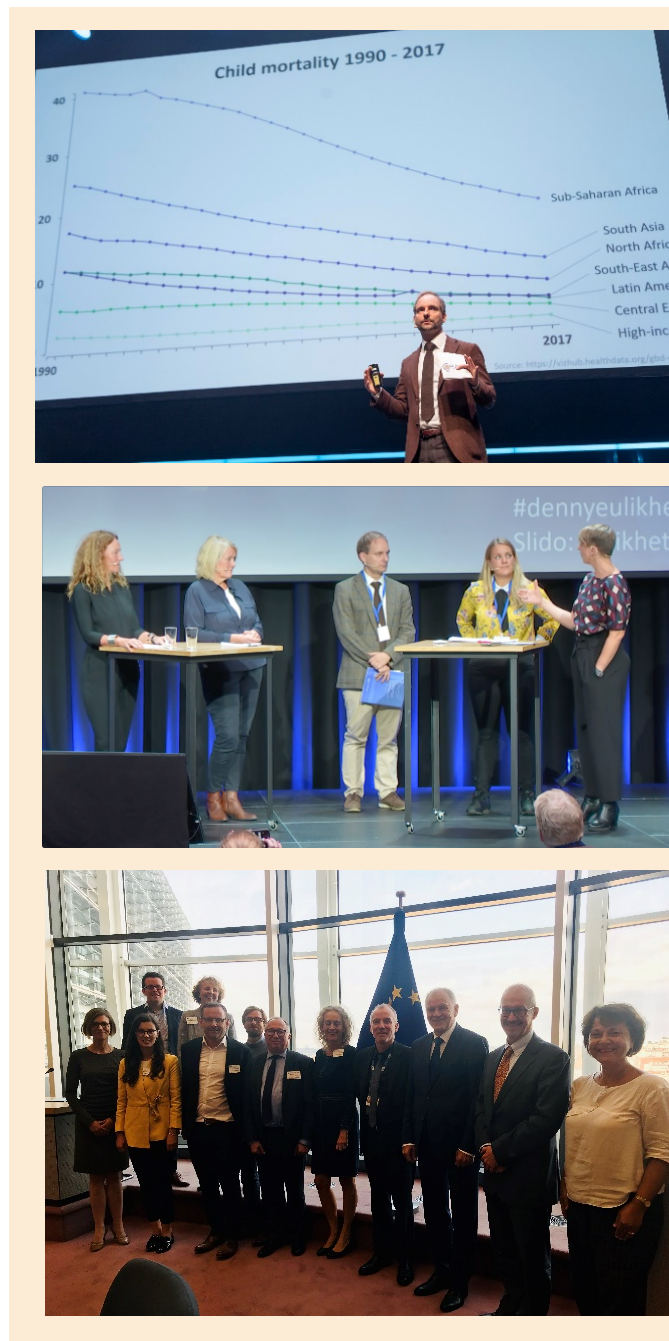
## Bringing global health inequalities to audiences in & beyond research

2019 was a busy year for health inequalities discussions in Norway and more broadly. In March, CHAIN leader Terje Andreas Eikemo debated Jonas Gahr Støre (leader of the Norwegian Labor Party) on how to solve tomorrow's greatest societal problems (which Terje argued are already here). In June, Trondheim hosted the first Big Challenge Festival, where Terje presented "How can we reduce the global health gap," alongside Chris Murray (IHME) who discussed "The state of world health today and trajectories for the future" ([link](#) in Norwegian). In Sweden, Terje presented "Social inequalities in health – what can be done to reduce them?" as part of the open popular science Stockholm Public Health Lecture series ([link](#)), followed by a panel discussion with Olle Lundberg (Stockholm University) and Johan Carlson (Swedish Public Health Agency). Terje also held a keynote ([link](#)) at the Norwegian Research Council's event on "The New Inequality" and participated in a panel debate along with Camilla Stoltenberg (Norwegian Institute of Public Health), Hannah Gitmark (journalist) and Kristin Clemet (Civitia, former minister of Education and Research).

CHAIN Research coordinator and postdoc Mirza Balaj presented "Social Trajectories in European Welfare States" in a meeting with European Commissioner of Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis, 13 September in Brussels, arranged by the European Social Survey team and including Caroline Costongs (EuroHealthNet) and other key stakeholders on the topic of *using social science data and interdisciplinary research to help reduce global health inequalities* ([link](#)). Congratulations to Mirza on defending her PhD this spring!

CHAIN's partnership with UNICEF grew this year, together with colleagues at UNICEF Norge, Office of Research – Innocenti, and New York Headquarters. In October, CHAIN researchers met in Oslo with the UNICEF Norge team and Debra Jackson to define opportunities for student exchange and shared research and policy priorities. PhD student Elodie Besnier attended Innocenti's workshop *Strengthening Data and Research for Children in Urban Settings*, held in Florence in November. Postdoc Kam Sripada initiated collaboration with the UNICEF Health Section focusing on children's environmental health as drivers of survival, health, and well-being globally, introducing staff to the topic through global webinars and working together to develop UNICEF Health's first-ever strategic framework on environmental pollution and climate change and a new public-private partnership.

On social media this year, CHAIN posted over 120 times both on Twitter (232 followers) and Facebook (489 likes), including 2 new videos viewed almost 400 times. Social media has allowed us to connect with students across disciplines and highlight collaboration with our international partners.







CHAIN has partnered with the International Agency on Cancer (IARC) on the *Cancer Screening in Five Continents* project with Dr. Partha Basu. Terje and Mirza are part of the CanScreen5 advisory group, to address inequalities in cancer screening and reduce cancer disease burden ([link](#)). Mirza presented “Characteristics of equitable cancer” at the EU Expert Group meeting in Brussels 13 October, coordinated by the Association of the European Cancer League, on the topic *Towards the third implementation report on cancer screening in Europe and review of the Council Recommendation on cancer screening* (2003) ([link](#)).

## Engaging across disciplines to address social inequalities in health and causal factors

CHAIN has continued to participate actively in field of sociology in Norway, where this year PhD student Emil Øversveen chaired the Health Sociology session at the annual conference of the Norwegian Sociological Association in January and led a panel session on social inequalities at the sociology festival the Norwegian Sociological Association in September, along with Maren Toft and Ingvi Stuvøy (NTNU). CHAIN also participated in the Folkehelsekonferansen, held in Oslo 15-16 October. Professor Indra de Soysa and a master’s student investigated links between social globalization, access to information communication technologies, and youth obesity. Ibrahima Amadou Dia started a postdoc in the fall to work on global health issues including health professional migration with Professor Jonathon Moses, who received praise this year for his book Eurobondage: The Political Costs of Monetary Union in Europe.

In addition to regular presentations for colleagues at NTNU and other Norwegian universities, CHAIN researchers have also been active in professional organizations in multiple disciplines. Senior researcher Courtney McNamara and PhD student Ginny Kotzias, working together on the Trade, Labour Market and Health project, have taken on leadership roles in the American Public Health Association’s Trade and Health Forum, as Chair and Secretary, respectively. At the American Public Health Association, they shared their presentation on “Trade, Labor Markets, and Health: A Conceptual Framework.” Postdoctoral researcher Vera Skalicka represented CHAIN at the Lifepath consortium meeting in Geneva, ECSR Inequality over the life course conference in Lausanne, Promenta conference at UiO, and the Eurocohort consortium conference in Brussels, focused on the topic of social inequalities in children's mental health and academic performance. Elodie was elected to the board of DION, NTNU’s interest organization for PhD students, postdocs, and temporary employees. Kam serves on the social media team and 2020 conference planning committee of the International Society for Children’s Health and the Environment (ISCHE).



At the annual European Public Health Conference in Marseille, France, CHAIN members from different organizations (Johan Mackenbach, Clare Bamba, Caroline Costongs pictured, Elodie, and Mirza) all together chaired, moderated, or presented in 10 sessions. Topic ranged from health disparities, to INHERIT, early childhood health, ageing and the welfare state, and migrant inequalities in urban settings. CHAIN also attended the 2019 World Health Summit in Berlin, Germany. EuroHealthNet has partnered to disseminate and communicate research-based findings, and this year led the creation of a new informational brochure for wide distribution.

## Innovative research on quantifying social determinants of global health trends

Over 2019, CHAIN significantly strengthened partnerships addressing several of its objectives:

- monitor international variations in health inequalities between and within countries
- identify the causal drivers of health inequalities in different countries
- evaluate interventions that could reduce health inequalities
- reduce the distance between research, policy and practice
- develop the next generation of global health inequalities researchers

Terje Andreas Eikemo, Johan Mackenbach, Simon Øverland, Mirza Balaj, Tim Huijts, and Emmanuela Gakidou outlined plans for “Establishing a Global Socioeconomic Network and Data Warehouse to Monitor and Explain Health Inequalities” ([link](#)) that will allow previously disparate datasets to come under one roof and allow important discoveries through linkages of existing and new data.

CHAIN has partnered with the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, Seattle, to quantify how inequalities in education impact health, specifically child and adult mortality. The interaction between education and health has become a priority area for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as a growing topic in the Global Burden of Disease Study. Throughout 2019, our two institutions worked closely together to develop a protocol, train master’s students and researchers on research techniques, and conduct a first-of-its-kind systematic review that aims to quantify unequal education and disparities in child mortality. CHAIN hosted the IHME team of Emmanuela Gakidou, Hunter York, Joe Friedman, and Erin Mullany in Trondheim and are excited to develop this collaborative work further.

## Launch of 29 recommendations to combat health inequalities

Terje was a member of the former Council on Social Inequalities in Health, which has taken action to provide specific advice to reduce social health differences, by the publication of 29 recommendations (in the *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*) to combat health inequalities. The recommendations focus on the entire social gradient rather than just poverty and the socially disadvantaged. By proposing action on the social determinants of health such as affordable child-care, education, living environments and income structures, the council aims to facilitate a possible re-orientation of policy away from redistribution to universalism.

## CHAIN special issue on the Greek refugee crisis

In December, CHAIN published a special issue on the Greek refugee crisis in the *Journal of Refugee Studies* (Oxford University Press), based on the REHEAL study, conducted in 2016 during the early phase of refugees’ settlement in the Greek refugee camps Eleonas, Diavata, Veroia, Skaramangas, Schisto, and Samos Island. Conducted together with the National Centre for Social Research in Greece (EKKE), the study provides a unique snapshot of the early phase of accommodation in Greece, less than a year after the peak of arrivals in the country in autumn 2015. The special issue showed that lengthy operational and asylum procedures have a detrimental effect on the health of refugees, particularly on children, who have different coping mechanisms than adults. Their health situation in the camps seems to be worsening over time, while they also experience difficulties regarding issues of discrimination and integration in the host countries. Proper living conditions are thus essential in providing a sense of safety and protection to these vulnerable groups.

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