

PART E | **Holding to account: global institutions, transnational corporations and rich nations**

Although positioned near the end, this section of the *Global Health Watch* is its central component. Here the *Watch* goes beyond other annual reports on aspects of world health to reflect on the performance of global institutions, governments and corporations.

The monitoring component of the *Watch* is diverse, combining short and long pieces on these different actors. But again, common themes emerge. First amongst these is meanness. The chapter on aid reveals how much richer the developed nations have got over the last forty years, but how they spend nearly exactly the same now on aid to the developing world as they did in the 1960s. Despite repayments worth hundreds of millions of dollars, developing nations are still paying through the nose for mistakes made both by themselves *and* rich nations during the lending frenzy of the 1970s. Or rather, it is the poor in the developing world today who unfairly pay for the past mistakes of governments and institutions long gone or from distant lands.

The second common theme is lack of democracy. The chapters on the international institutions – WHO, Unicef, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as analysis of the World Trade Organization in part A of the *Watch* – reveal a crisis of governance provoked by the attempts of rich nations to make the international order in their own image. The recent US-driven appointments of Paul Wolfowitz and Ann Veneman to head the World Bank and Unicef respectively are symptoms of the crisis. The chapters suggest reforms to re-balance the scales of influence.

A third theme is misuse of power. Mismanagement and distorted priorities are a common factor in the despair felt by many working in and around the health-promoting international institutions. A deliberately long chapter on WHO concentrates not only the harsh external environment the organization faces, but the internal management problems which lead to organizational paralysis. But, as the chapter shows, change from within is possible.

Finally, health is a field where the effects of corporate decisions are keenly felt. Two case studies on tobacco control and the marketing of breastmilk substitutes show both how business can be regulated by international regulatory intervention, and the success of international advocacy by citizens' groups; although they also show the continuing attempts by corporations to

undermine these regulations. Overall, the environment for business couldn't be friendlier, with massive falls registered in taxes on profits in the developed world as another case study shows. The case study suggests that we need to fight a campaign for increased tax or risk the withering away of the state and our public services.