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WHO collaborates with OHCHR and the Ministry of Health to ensure integration of human rights into health



(L-R) Ms Ms Maarit Kohonen (OHCHR), Dr Melville George (WHO Rep), Ms Annelie Rostedt (WHO/Uganda) and Ms Helena Nygren-Krug (WHO/HQ) at the opening of the workshop.

In recent years, WHO has integrated human rights into its work which has strengthened its contribution to health development in member countries. Presently, every member state of WHO is party to at least one international human rights treaty, which recognizes the right to the enjoyment of the highest standard of physical and mental health (the right to health) or other health-related rights.

This was said by the WHO Representative to Uganda, Dr Melville George at the opening of a capacity building workshop on Health and

Human Rights, in Kampala. Dr George said that the process of developing a global WHO strategy on health and human rights to guide member states has been initiated and Uganda has the opportunity to demonstrate the importance of human rights in health and to urge for an acceleration of the process.”

According to Dr George, “Human Rights require countries to disaggregate data to understand whether there are any differences in health status between men and women or between rich and poor, and to identify who are the vulnerable groups that may not be able to access health facilities”



Participants at the Capacity Building Workshop on Health and Human Rights

Dr George added that Human Rights “compel nations to not only focus on the health *needs* of communities, but to respond to them with the recognition that these communities actually have a *right* to health.” The right to health stress that health services, goods and facilities must be available, accessible, acceptable and of good quality.

Speaking at the same function Ms Maarit Kohonen, Head Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) urged countries to ensure that rights such as right to life, shelter, education, employment because they have a direct bearing on health outcomes. Ms Kohonen commended Uganda which has ratified seven major international human rights treaties despite the different level of development evident in various parts of the country.

Earlier Dr Francis Runumi, Commissioner of Health Services (Planning) in the Ministry of Health outlined the ways in which the current Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSPII)

address issues of Human Rights in relation to accessibility, acceptability, affordability and quality. The neglected diseases were given as an indicator for mainstreaming human rights concerns into health. He called on all stakeholders to take on their roles and responsibilities as “the war against ill health in the context of human rights cannot be won by health workers alone”.

Participants in the workshop include the Chairperson of the Uganda Human Rights Commission Mrs. Margaret Sekajja, the Health Service Commission, Civil Society organizations, Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Ministry of Education, selected district health team members, UN agencies and other stakeholders.

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