

Millions of women and men of different ages within different social and economic groups do not benefit adequately from national health policies or strategies.

There have been multiple international and national agreements and commitments on human rights and gender equality, but these have yet to be incorporated into many national health policies. Practical ways to uphold these commitments are often absent, leaving men, women and children in vulnerable groups at increased risk for negative health outcomes due to systemic exclusion and gender-blind approaches.

Implementation of commitments by governments on human rights and gender equality require their incorporation into national legislation, development and health sector plans and policies.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness refers to gender equality and human rights as key cross-cutting issues for all development sectors. This tool will draw attention to and help operationalize these issues in the health sector by:

- identifying gaps in health sector documents for future strategic interventions;
- creating a supportive policy environment that respects and promotes the rights of women and men of different ages and vulnerable groups; and
- linking national commitments on human rights and gender equality to health sector policies and strategies.

Harmonization of methods needed to combine a human rights-based approach, gender analysis and the WHO health systems framework.

The tool aims to combine both human rights and gender analysis to avoid duplication of efforts. A series of analysis tables enables users to undertake a human rights and gender-based analysis of the process and policy outcomes of health sector strategic planning. National implementation of health-related human rights and gender equality commitments are addressed and linked to the national legal and policy framework.

Data is primarily gathered through a desk review, though some interviews are needed to collect information on national level mechanisms. The tool supports the identification of both gaps and opportunities in health sector strategic planning in order to catalyse strategic interventions.

Alignment with country priorities and methods for health development as well as for human rights and gender equality.

Supporting a harmonized approach among different health actors, and emphasizing governmental stewardship, the tool is intended for use by actors whose responsibilities include implementation or monitoring of health policies, health planning, engagement in broader development activities, health care delivery and patient advocacy.

Improved dialogue is urgently needed on gender equality and human rights among governments, national health stakeholders and health development partners.

To date, the tool has been piloted in Uganda, Zambia and Yemen. The findings of the pilot studies will be incorporated in the preparatory work and in the dialogues for the next health sector plan reviews.

The tool will be available for common use by end 2010. The tool is currently under peer review by various health, human rights and gender equality experts and staff in various programme areas, regional and country offices in both partner organizations.

For more information

Sida: The Health Division and the Programme Based Approaches group, Department of Democracy and Social development (goran.paulsson@sida.se)
WHO: Department of Ethics, Equity, Trade and Human Rights – Health and Human Rights team (nygrenkrugh@who.int)
Department of Gender, Women and Health (olukoyaa@who.int) (abdools@who.int)